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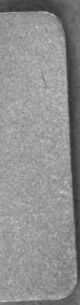
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THE
LIFE
OF
ST. FRANCIS OF SALES,
BISHOP AND PRINCE OF GENEVA,
FOUNDER OF THE ORDER
OF THE
VISITATION.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH OF

M. DE MARSOLLIER,

DEAN OF THE CATHEDRAL OF USES.

By the Rev. WILLIAM HENRY COOMBES, D. D.
Author of SACRED ELOQUENCE.

VOL. I.

SHEPTON-MALLET: PRINTED BY W. J. QUARTLEY;
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1812.

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E
S 13
TO MRS. TUNSTAL.

MADAM,

Having brought the translation of the Life of St. Francis of Sales to the eve of publication, I feel no difficulty in the choice of the person, to whom the performance should with propriety be addressed. The marked veneration, which you have ever discovered for this great man, the devotion which you have constantly shewn to so eminent a Saint, and the kindness, protection and munificence, with which you have invariably honoured his Spiritual Daughters of the Visitation, our excellent friends of Sales House, strongly enforce your claim to this slender tribute. Be pleased, Madam, to accept it with the same spirit, with which it is offered; and to give me credit for the sincerity of my wishes, that Providence may prolong your life to a very late period, and gild the evening of your days with that calm sunshine of peace and joy, which must ever arise in a well disposed mind, on the pleasing retrospect of a life, spent in devotion and good works.

I have the honour to be,

With the highest consideration,

MADAM,

Your obedient humble servant,

WILLIAM HENRY COOMBS.

ST. MICHAEL'S CHAPEL, SHEPTON-MALLET,

May 16, 1812.

PREFACE OF THE TRANSLATOR.

THE Life of St. Francis of Sales, here presented to the British public in a new dress, is not distinguished by those striking events, which influence the fate of empires, which awaken the curiosity of mankind, rouse their passions, call forth their powers, and give celebrity to the different actors in the scenes, that are exposed to view. The task of recording such events, seldom devolves on the biographer. His business is of a calmer nature; and when he relates the achievements of the wise and the good, his labours are unquestionably more instructive and more interesting to the Christian reader.

Of this description is the performance before us; in which we behold the youth of noble birth, of Christian dispositions, of exalted genius, of amiable manners, of unaffected piety, employing his powers in the service of religion, and relinquishing every prospect, however inviting, which the world held up to his view. We are gradually led to admire the fervent, the able, and the indefati-

gable priest, whose zeal nothing escapes; the reverend and sanctified prelate, whose constancy nothing subdues; whose charity for his flock is without limit; the laborious apostle, who, for the salvation of souls, knows no difficulty, declines no danger; who by his unwearied constancy, aided by the powerful impression of Divine grace, reconciles to the Church seventy-two thousand souls, that had been immersed in the darkness of error. As if Providence had designed to form a perfect character, which should command veneration and attract confidence, he was possessed of every advantage, which could promote that purpose. Splendor of descent, excellence of disposition, unrivalled talents, assiduous application, a singular proficiency in every branch of useful learning, a most tender piety, an ardent zeal for promoting the interests of religion, external graces of person, a polite and fascinating address, aided by every ornamental accomplishment, contributed to exhibit one of the most finished characters, to be found in the whole compass of Ecclesiastical history. He was in the best sense of the word, a great man; a commendation, which is but too

frequently bestowed on very erroneous principles. An attentive perusal of his life, it is not doubted, will be found fully to justify every term of praise, which is here employed. The British reader, who can seldom have an opportunity of forming a just idea of a good Bishop, will be here furnished with a finished model.

It cannot be denied that his judicious and elegant biographer, has done ample justice to his illustrious subject. Truth, the foundation of all history, he has fully consulted, by relating no fact, which is not well attested by the ancient and approved historians of the Life of St. Francis of Sales. The great mass of materials with which he was furnished from that source, he has arranged with considerable judgment; his narration is pleasing, his reflections are solid, and his style beautiful and elegant. Whatever imputation may be cast on this excellent writer, in consequence of the angry criticism of Dom Gervaise, on his life of the celebrated Abbot Rancé, the reformer of the order of La Trappe, his present performance is acknowledged to be unexceptionable. His country-

men, the best judges of his merit, have done him justice in this instance; and the approbation of the learned faculty of Sorbonne, is for the benefit of the British reader, inserted in the margin.*

This great work, which the Abbé Salvini has honoured with a translation into the Italian language, will surely not be thought unworthy of being presented to the English reader, in a new dress. The dignity of the subject and the excellence of the composition, give it an unquestionable

APPROBATION OF THE FIRST EDITION.

* I have read by the order of the Lord Chancellor, a book entitled, "The Life of St. Francis of Sales, Bishop and Prince of Geneva, Founder of the order of the Visitation," written by the Abbé de Marsollier, Prebendary of the Cathedral of Usés; in which I have found nothing, that is not agreeable to faith and morality. This illustrious author, who, by his manner of writing, proves himself to be in all respects a most exact historian, while he exhibits in this performance, a finished picture of St. Francis of Sales, delineates at the same time the duties of the different states, which compose the Church. He accompanies the incidents of the life of this great Bishop with such proper and such Christian reflections, that on all occasions he inspires his reader, without interrupting his attention, with a sincere and tender attachment to true piety. The great variety of extraordinary actions, and remarkable circumstances, which he has collected with

claim to such a distinction. It will scarcely be objected, that the task of translating is below the attention of a literary man, and that the leisure of such a character should be devoted solely to original composition. That the literature of a country is not always improved by translation, and that many who are unable to write, embark in this pursuit, are facts, which it is vain to deny. But the learned reader is not to be informed, that there are splendid exceptions to these general observations; that the Romans in the golden age of their litera-

very considerable care, so well authenticated, and arranged in such a plain and natural manner, renders this work, even after the publication of various lives of St. Francis of Sales, as valuable and pleasing, as if the subject were altogether new. Given at Sorbonne, Nov. 21, 1699.

(Signed)

F. SALMON,

Royal Professor.

APPROBATION OF THE EDITION OF 1773.

I have read by the order of the Lord Chancellor, the Life of St. Francis of Sales, by M. de Marsollier. It is impossible to multiply too much the editions of a work, which is rendered so interesting by the dignity of the subject, and the elegant manner, in which it is written. Given at Sorbonne, July 18, 1773.

(Signed)

DU VOISIN,

Royal Professor.

ture, enriched their language with the treasures of Greece; that the nations of modern Europe, have been eager to adopt the same plan, and that some of the finest productions in the annals of learning, are translations of some great original. That employment then will assuredly not be regarded as ignoble, which occupied the leisure of Terence, of Cicero and of Germanicus; which has transfused the beauties of Homer into the English language; which has rendered familiar to the common reader some of the most beautiful compositions of the ancients; which has warmed the bosoms of Britons with the energy and fire of Demosthenes.

Whatever may be the general opinion of such a mode of employing the leisure, which is found in the intervals of professional pursuits, the present translator freely declares, that when St. Francis of Sales is the subject, and Marsollier the biographer, he feels his task honourable and inviting. But the pious reader will not be displeased at the attempt; and for his benefit only is it intended, without any regard to the small

pittance of reputation, which it may bring. Perhaps persons of this description will recollect with some feeling, the labours of a man who has taken no ordinary pains to promote their edification; and when he is no more, they will, in their addresses to the throne of mercy, undoubtedly not forget the useful toil of one who has laboured solely for their spiritual welfare. This is a reflection, which conveys no inconsiderable share of comfort; this is an advantage, which will be valued,

Above all Greek, above all Roman fame.

THE LIFE

OF

Saint Francis of Sales.

BOOK I.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST BOOK.

STATE of the Church at the period, when Saint Francis of Sales was born....Character of the Count and Countess of Sales his parents....Edifying particulars of his education....He is sent to Paris to pursue his studies....Progress which he makes in the sciences, and in piety....He makes a vow of perpetual continence, and forms the resolution of embracing the ecclesiastical state....He prepares himself for the duties of his vocation, by an exemplary life, and continual exercises of piety....Dreadful temptation which God permits for the trial of his virtue....He is delivered from it by the intercession of The Blessed Virgin....Having completed his studies, he returns to Sales, the seat of his family....He is sent to Padua to study the law: he unites with that pursuit the study of theology and controversy, under the celebrated Jesuit, the Father Possevinus....Singular and dangerous adventures, which give a lustre to his virtue....He is seized with a dangerous illness; and notwithstanding

VOL. I.

A

every unfavourable appearance, is restored to health....He resumes his studies....The famous Doctor Pancyröla proposes him to the whole university as a model of virtue....He receives the Doctor's cap, and leaves Padua to proceed to Rome....He escapes an imminent danger by a particular protection of Divine Providence....Journey to Loretto and Venice: he encounters a dreadful storm at sea; his piety and composure in the midst of the danger....He arrives at Venice; the licentiousness of the youth induces him to quit it after a short interval....He proceeds to the Castle of Thuille, where he meets his father and mother....Character of Saint Francis of Sales at this period; his rare and singular qualities....He pays a visit to the Bishop of Geneva, who predicts that he is one day to be his successor....His father, the Count of Sales, sends him to Chamberry, for the purpose of procuring him admission into the Senate....During his absence, he enters into an advantageous treaty of marriage for his son, and makes him the proposal on his return....Francis resists the solicitations, which are made to obtain his consent; he declines with equal firmness the dignity of senator, which the Duke of Savoy offers him....He communicates to one of his relatives, the design which he had formed of embracing the ecclesiastical state; desires him to impart it to his parents, and obtain their consent; which after many difficulties is given....He is invested with the highest dignity of the Chapter of Geneva, of which he consents to take possession, with extreme reluctance, and after starting many difficulties....Edifying manner, in which he prepares for the reception of holy orders; he resumes his sacred studies....They are interrupted by his immediate preparation for the priesthood....Success of his first sermons....He commences missionary in the neighbourhood of Annecy....

Charitable and disinterested manner, in which he discharges the duties of his station....He establishes a Charitable Confraternity....Excellent rules, which he proposes to those whom he associated in this concern.... He composes the work entitled, *The Standard of the Cross*; in answer to a Calvinist minister, who had directed an attack against the religious veneration paid by the Church to the Cross....Plan and purport of his treatise....He is again urged to accept the dignity of senator, of which the Duke of Savoy makes him a second offer. He declines it with the view of devoting his whole time to his ecclesiastical ministry....His manner of life; his sentiments and maxims on the true spirit of Christianity.

THE LIFE
OF
SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES,

BISHOP and PRINCE of GENEVA,

FOUNDER of the ORDER of the VISITATION

OF
THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

BOOK THE FIRST.

THE Holy Bishop, whose life, by the help of God, I purpose to write, came into the world, at a period when the Church stood in peculiar need of the assistance, which he was enabled to afford. She was assailed without with an overwhelming mixture of heresies; and defiled within with a corruption of manners, which had infected all ranks of men. Ignorance, licentiousness, and a total absence of all restraint had extended their influence even to the sanctuary,

and had produced the natural consequences of these evils, which are described by those, who witnessed them, in the most glowing colours.

The situation of France,* and of the neighbouring states, was, at that period, peculiarly deplorable. Nothing was to be observed, but intestine commotions, divisions, conflagrations, murders, sacrileges; nothing was seen, but the fatal effects of heresy, aided by impiety, and inflamed with fury, which exceeded the horrors of civil war. In every part, the unhallowed fire was lighted up; the ornaments of the churches, the writings of the holy Fathers, for which the most ancient libraries were ransacked, crosses, vases consecrated to God, the images of the Saints, even their relics and sacred bones, were consumed in the flames, and the ashes indecently thrown into rivers. Priests dragged forcibly from the altar, imprisoned, massacred; altars demolished, and buried under the ruins of the temples; holy places profaned, and the ancient worship abolished; all these scenes contributed to form a melancholy spectacle of horror and desolation, and to excite a doubt whether countries, so peculiarly favoured by Heaven, in ancient times, were now inhabited by

* Acta Concil. Trid. Lovan. 1567.

Christians, or had suddenly fallen under the dominion of infidels.

The Council of Trent,* which had just terminated its sessions, had endeavoured, almost without effect, to arrest the progress of these disorders. The remedies prescribed by that venerable assembly, had served in many instances, but to exasperate the evil; the conflagration acquired additional strength, even in consequence of the efforts, which were made to extinguish it. The contempt with which the Council was treated by some, the small share of estimation, in which it was held by others, and the weak and unsteady attempts, in the execution of its decrees, made by persons, whose stations called for promptitude and vigour, appeared likely to give duration to the general disorders.

But divine Providence, which has fixed boundaries to the raging ocean, which sometimes permits impiety to bear the sway, in order to confound it with more effect, at length put a period to the evil. Religion gradually resumed its ancient lustre; the faith began to recover its influence. Returning piety brought back in its train, innocence and purity of manners; and it reflects no small degree of credit on St. Francis of Sales, that he

* 1563.

was made by Providence a leading instrument in producing so wonderful a change.

To effect this exalted purpose, and that he might be destitute of no advantage, which could contribute to the execution of this design, he was ennobled by illustrious birth, and endowed with those qualities of mind and body, which tended to enhance its lustre. In the family to which he belonged, piety appeared to be a species of inheritance. Providence blessed him with parents, distinguished by a real spirit of Christian virtue; who laboured incessantly to preserve the baptismal innocence of their child. That the contagion of the world, might not taint his innocent soul, he was inspired with an early disgust for its vanities. No sooner had he known it, than it became to him an object of contempt; and to disengage himself from it for ever, he formed a resolution, on the earliest occasion, of embracing the ecclesiastical state, though he was the eldest son of his illustrious family. It was apparent, that he did not follow this profession, with a view to lead an easy and inactive life. He had no sooner devoted his powers to the Church, than he began to live no longer for himself. He was long employed in the most laborious functions of the sacred ministry; and had his own judgment been followed, he would have finished

his days in the same painful career, without aspiring to the dignities, which were to reward his apostolical labours. God was satisfied with the sacrifice of his heart, and in opposition to the desires of his servant, raised him to the government of the church of Geneva. This was not eventually to prove beneficial to one diocese only. France, Italy, Savoy, were to be the witnesses and objects of his zeal. In that station, he discovered those singular qualifications, that discreet and steady conduct, which, on all occasions, attracted the reverence of the episcopal order, the esteem of the sacred college, the love and respect of the different Potentates and Sovereign Pontiffs; and what is more remarkable, he ever commanded the esteem and honour of the Calvinists themselves, of whom he proved to be the scourge.

*Francis of Sales was born on the Twenty-first of August, in the year One thousand, five hundred and sixty-seven, at the castle of Sales. His family was one of the most noble and ancient of Savoy. At the time of his birth, the holy Pope, Pius V. governed the Church; Charles IX. was King of France, and Savoy was ruled by the Duke Emmanuel Philibert, father of Charles Emmanuel, so

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Life of St. Fran. Book I.

well known for his contests with France. His father was Francis, Count of Sales, and his mother Frances of Sionas; both distinguished by the lustre of their birth, but rendered more eminent by their exemplary virtue and piety. Francis, Count of Sales, was a nobleman whose character was strongly marked with a share of probity, which belonged to ancient times; with the most scrupulous sincerity; with a rigorous attachment to the duties of religion, almost without example, and with a degree of rectitude and honour, which placed him above the temptations of a corrupted age. His zeal for the Catholic religion attracted peculiar notice; as Calvinism, which was then in its infancy, and prevailed principally at Geneva, was considered a commodious sect, and a religion, connected with wit and fashion. † Frances of Sionas, to the good qualities of her husband, added a most tender and affectionate piety, spotless chastity, singular modesty, and an uncommon love for retirement.

But among the virtues, which rendered them both dear to God and to man, there was one, that appeared with distinguished lustre, and strongly contributed to attract the blessings, with which the

† Deposition of the Mother de Chantal.

Almighty favoured their family; an uncommon predilection for charity to the poor. With a holy emulation they studiously reduced to practice that advice of the scripture, so indispensably necessary to persons engaged in the world and in marriage: *Turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly: if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little.* Tob. c. 4, v. 7, 8, 9.

Though their charities were diffused very generally among the poor and the indigent, yet they were principally directed to the relief of those persons who were expelled from their estates by the Calvinists. They considered themselves obliged in a peculiar manner, to assist those who chose to make a generous sacrifice of their all, rather than depart from that fidelity, which they owed to God and to the Church. To persons of this description, they were not content to allow what was necessary for the support of nature; their tender feelings prompted them even to administer the comforts of life. The vicinity of Geneva and Switzerland, where Calvinism chiefly prevailed, furnished them with such frequent opportunities of extending this

species of relief, that piety less strongly rooted, would have yielded to an impression of disgust. Their virtue was put to the test; and God rewarded their tender regard for distress, by bestowing on them a son, who may safely be pronounced to have been the fruit of their charity.

*The Countess of Sales, was not far advanced in a state of pregnancy, when the Duchess of Nemours, whose first husband was the Duke of Guise, arrived at Annecy, attended by the Cardinals of Lorraine and Guise, and a splendid retinue of nobility of both sexes from the Court of France. This Princess was in every place treated with the most honourable distinction, not only in consideration of her immediate descent from Hercules, Duke of Ferrara, and from Renée of France, but also on account of her second marriage with James of Savoy, Duke of Nemours and Genevois, of which Annecy is the capital. The rank, which the Countess held in the province, rendered her presence necessary on this occasion. She had no object in view, but to perform a duty, which a sense of decorum imposed on her, when it happened that the sacred winding sheet was, at that time, conveyed from Chamberry to Annecy. This had

* Aug. of Sales.

taken place by the permission of the Duke of Savoy, at the solicitation of the Duchess, and the two Cardinals. At the sight of this impressive token of the love of God towards men, the Countess of Sales felt a tenderness of devotion, which she had never before experienced.† Like Anna, the mother of Samuel, she with confidence laid open her heart before God; she offered him the infant, whom she then bore in her womb; she entreated Him to be a father to her future offspring, to preserve it from the corruption of the world, and rather to deprive her of the delight and advantage of becoming a mother, than to suffer her to be the parent of a child, who by losing the grace of baptism, might ever be so unfortunate as to become His enemy.

A prayer so fervent was not uttered without effect. God heard the mother; and diffused over the soul of the son, that abundance of graces and benedictions, which raised him to a high degree of sanctity; of which proofs will be exhibited in the following history

The Countess returned home, animated with a holy confidence, that God had accepted the offer,

† Deposition of the Mother de Chantal.

she had made of her child; she ever considered him, as a deposit, entrusted to her care, of which she had to give an account. He came into the world a short time after her return from An-necy; * and was baptized in the Church of Tho-rens; the name of Francis was given him, which was that of his parents and of his Godfather. As he was born in the seventh month, he was extremely delicate, notwithstanding the scrupulous care of his mother, to avoid every thing, which might prove injurious to her offspring: he was reared with considerable difficulty, and his life was more than once despaired of by the faculty.

He however escaped the dangers of childhood; and against all appearance, improved both in strength and stature. In proportion as his features began to assume a regular appearance, he was observed to possess a degree of beauty, accompanied with a sweetness of countenance, which attracted the love of every beholder. This advantage of external form, was united to the finest natural disposition. He was mild, submissive to his parents and masters, and distinguished by such a share of ingenuous modesty, as proves the best guardian against the first impressions of vice.

* Aug. of Sales. Ibid.

* The pious Countess bestowed her undivided attention on the education of her child, never suffered him to be out of her sight, and omitted no opportunity of forming him to early habits of virtue. She conducted him herself to church, instilled into his infant mind the most profound veneration for the temple of God, and a fondness for prayer, for religious instruction, and all exercises of piety, which are there practised. She even took him with her in the visits, which she usually paid to the poor; she initiated him in the art of relieving distress, by such attentions as were adapted to his years, and employed him in distributing her charities. It was her practice to read to him the lives of the saints, and to accompany the lecture with reflections, suited to his capacity. Thus did this pious and charitable mother gradually train her son to the exercises of piety and charity; thus did she instruct him by her own actions, and form him to virtue by so improving an example.

This virtuous child not only corresponded with the care of so excellent a mother, but even far exceeded her parental expectations. He heard mass, and performed his other devotions with a degree of recollection and fervour, much above his years.†

* Ibid. † Ibid. Deposition of the Mother de Chantal.

It was to him a constant source of amusement to ornament little oratories, and perform himself the ceremonies of the Church. Modesty and sincerity prevailed in his actions and in his conversation; and whenever he was guilty of such faults as are incident to children, he would always undergo correction, rather than avoid punishment by a lie. His charity to the poor, was, at that early age, marked with very peculiar traits. He not only executed with fidelity and promptitude, the little commissions which his mother gave him for their relief; but he would petition all his relations in their favour, and generously give them whatever he received for his private use; when he had exhausted his little supplies, he would part with his food for their support.

If the inclinations of the Countess had been followed, this excellent child would have been educated under her immediate inspection. She would have employed at home, persons, capable of giving him a tincture of human learning; and would have made a willing sacrifice in point of knowledge, that his virtue might be exposed to less hazard. The truth is, the licentiousness and corruption prevalent in colleges, were to her a source of alarm, and she wished that more time at least might be allowed for piety to take the deepest root.

in his tender heart. But her husband the Count, whose views in the education of his son, were not altogether so exalted, and who was fully sensible of the advantages of emulation to youth in the acquisition of science, peremptorily insisted, that he should be placed in a college. At the age of six years he was sent to Rochville, and soon after to Annecy, which is about three long leagues from the castle of Sales.

His progress in learning corresponded with the advances, which he had made in piety. He lost nothing he had learned under the direction of his virtuous mother; and soon attained the knowledge, which his first masters were capable of giving. It was remarked, even at that early period, that he possessed a solid judgment, an excellent memory, great talents for eloquence, a peculiar taste in the choice of good authors, and the seeds of all those rare and eminent qualities, which afterwards rendered him one of the most learned, as well as the most holy prelates of the church. Such happy dispositions, improved by assiduous labour, and a share of application, sufficient to ensure success to talents less eminent, induced the Count of Sales to think, that no more time should be lost at Annecy. He therefore determined to send his son to Paris, to finish his studies in the college of Navarre, in which many gentlemen of his ac-

quaintance had received an excellent education.

On this subject, the Countess of Sales was consulted; but her consent to the plan could only be obtained, on condition that her son should spend some months at home before his departure. Her design was completely to strengthen his habits of virtue, and to shield him against the danger, to which he was going to be exposed, in a great city, subject to innumerable disorders, and in the company of profligate young men, who associate together for the wicked purpose of promoting mutual ruin.

Francis, on his return to Annecy, was informed that the Bishop of Bagneroy, purposed to hold an ordination at Clermont, in the province of Genevois; he on this occasion requested his father to be permitted to repair thither, in order to receive the tonsure. This proposal was by no means agreeable to the Count, who, from the rooted attachment to piety and devotion, which he discovered in his son, apprehended that he might be finally induced to engage in the Church, or to follow a religious institute. As he was the eldest son, and by consequence the hope of the family; and not less distinguished by his personal accomplishments, than by the qualities of his mind, and by those rare and singular attainments, which afforded a prospect, that he would prove one of

the most learned men of the age, such a plan was not in unison with the views of the father; and indeed it would have completely overturned the schemes which he had formed to place his son in the world in a situation becoming his great rank, and his personal endowments. But the Count was a man, at once religious and prudent. He was apprehensive, on one side, that a direct refusal, might excite in the mind of his son, reflections which had never been before entertained; that as human nature is extremely averse to restraint, he might seek for the ecclesiastical state, with an ardour, proportioned to the opposition which would be shown to his wishes; and, on the other, he believed that, if it were the will of God, the youth should abandon the world for ever, it would be vain to oppose the execution of the design.* With this view of the subject, he granted the permission which was solicited; and Francis received the tonsure in the ember days of September, in the year One thousand five hundred and seventy-eight.

On his return from Clermont, he was apprised by his mother, of the scheme which had been concerted, of removing him to Paris, to the college of Navarre, for the purpose of completing

* Idem ibid.

his studies.* His answer was modest and sensible. He declared that, in whatever regarded himself, he wished to have no other will, than that of his parents; but he begged, that a slight change might be made in the plan; and that, instead of going to the college of Navarre, he might be placed in an establishment, lately formed at Paris, by the fathers of the society of Jesus. He observed to the Countess, that she must be more aware than himself of the great credit, enjoyed by these fathers for their skill in training youth to piety and knowledge; that though he was satisfied other colleges might be equally eminent, he felt more attachment to the Jesuits; that this inclination might contribute to his advancement in learning; and that in reality it must be a matter of indifference to his father, which situation might finally be chosen. Such were the judicious reflections, which the young Count of Sales, for so he was now called, was capable of making, though he had not yet completed his twelfth year.† The authors of his life record them almost in the same terms, in which they were delivered.

The Countess of Sales felt the force of these reasons; she communicated them to the Count;

* Idem ibid.

† Idem ibid.

the plan was accordingly changed, and a resolution adopted of sending their son to the college of the Jesuits. While preparations were making for the journey, and a preceptor sought for, the Countess industriously pursued the purpose, for which this temporary delay was obtained. She bestowed her whole attention on the instruction of her son, with greater ardour, as she was likely to be deprived of his company for a long period; she often repeated to him, those memorable words, which Queen Blanche, the mother of St. Lewis, was in the habit of uttering to her son. "God is my witness, my child, how dear you are to me; but I would rather see you lying a corpse before my eyes, than ever hear that you had committed but one mortal sin." She laboured with unusual care to instil into his youthful heart, a tender love of God, mingled with unbounded confidence. She taught him, to look up to Him, as his true father. "However we may reason," would she say, "It is not I who have given you an existence. I am, indeed, your mother; because it has pleased Divine Providence to render me an instrument in bringing you into life. You were formed in my womb; but I did not bestow upon you, those members, that blood which flows in your veins, those animal spirits, which give motion to your frame; much less, that immaterial and immortal soul, which renders you capable of

eternal enjoyments. It is God, my child, who made you what you are; it is He, who preserves you; it is in Him, that all your hopes are to centre." Every object, which presented itself to view, furnished an occasion of enforcing her pious maxims. If she met a poor person, she observed to her son, that such a one, indigent as he was, must still be considered his brother, and that he had an equal right with himself to call God his father; that fortune had indeed made some distinction between them, but that nature and grace recognized no such difference; that in those two respects all mankind are on a perfect equality; that these reflections were never to be forgotten, and that he had ever to forbear treating such objects with harshness, with disdain, and with contempt.

In walking in the fields, she would direct his attention to the husbandman sowing his corn. "It is believed," would she piously exclaim, "that these are the persons who furnish us with subsistence. But how vain are their solitary endeavours! An inconsiderable excess of rain or of sultry weather, is sufficient to blast the efforts of their labour; these causes are capable of diffusing a general famine, and of reducing us to the lamentable calamity of perishing by hunger. But those salutary rains, that moderate degree of heat,

those seasons, which bring the fruits of the earth to maturity, must depend upon God alone. Here human efforts are unavailing.”

By these and similar instructions, frequently repeated with energy, did the Countess of Sales, form the youthful heart of her son to a tender love of God, and to a feeling and lively attention to his neighbour. The fruits of this early culture, will be fully displayed in the following history.* The Count of Sales, on his side, seconded the efforts of his spouse, but with this observable difference in the nature of his instructions: he laboured to render his son an accomplished gentleman, while she had no other object in view, than to make him a good Christian. Both succeeded in their attempts; for they lived to enjoy the satisfaction, of seeing their son, dear to God and to man. The time fixed for his departure was now come; he accordingly set off for Paris under the tuition of John Deage, a prudent and able priest. This person had been chosen for the purpose, in preference to a lay-governor, the plan usually adopted in those days, at the particular request of the Countess, who was persuaded, that his character would oblige him to give the best example to her son, and to

* Idem *ibid.*

superintend his conduct with more vigilant attention.

France, at this period,* exhibited an aspect of distress and desolation, altogether unexampled in the annals of the monarchy. Civil and religious wars, which had spread devastation, under the preceding reigns of Francis II. and Charles IX. continued, under that of Henry III., with unabated fury. Four Catholic armies, opposed to an equal number of the adverse party, had already defaced its finest provinces; and the league which had just been formed, presented the terrors of a third faction, equally hostile to the interests of the king, and of the monarchy. Towns taken and retaken, consigned to pillage, and almost reduced to ruin; churches destroyed; the ancient religion banished from one part of the kingdom, and but ill supported in the other; disunion prevalent in every division of the state, and often among the members of the same family; subjects engaged in rebellion against their prince; his authority usurped by as many tyrants, as there were lords in the provinces; the popular branch of government rising to superior consequence, and threatening the destruction of the monarchy; the prince sunk in effeminacy and

* 1578.

inaction, and ruled by a small number of worthless favourites; acting but an insignificant character, despised by one part of his subjects, and hated by the other; the laws violated with contempt; justice without authority; hypocrisy, impiety, blasphemy, a general indifference for religion; finally, a complete want of all subordination and restraint, from the precincts of the court, to the extremity of the provinces; these were the awful indications of the anger of the Deity, justly provoked, which threatened to overwhelm France in one common ruin. Such was the situation of the country, when the young Count of Sales, arrived in France, for the first time. As heresy had produced the same bitter fruits in that part of Savoy, in which he was born, these scenes of horror, were not to him, altogether new and unexpected. His preceptor, who omitted no opportunity of imparting instruction to his pupil, and awfully impressed with the lamentable situation of the finest kingdom in Christendom, observed to him, ~~that~~ piety and justice unquestionably form the most solid foundation of states, and are the firmest support of empires; that it is dangerous to weaken the impression of religion, and to give an unrestrained range to human reason, and to the senses; and that the bonds, which unite God with man, are never loosened, without breaking those, which connect human society

together. With these reflections in their minds, which fresh objects continually recalled to their recollection, they proceeded to Paris.

On their arrival, the young Count of Sales desired instantly to be introduced to the college of the Jesuits. He was received with that * partiality and favour, which he excited wherever he went. His acquirements at that early age were such; as induced the directors of the establishment to place him in the class of rhetoric; and during the two years, which he devoted to that branch of study, he made so great a progress, that he afterwards became one of the most eloquent men of his age. The usual course of philosophical studies, he pursued with the same success. As his talents were of the first class, and his application corresponded with the vigour of his mind, he found means to unite with this branch of learning, great attention to scholastic theology. In this extraordinary exertion, he was assisted by the studies of his preceptor, who employed his leisure in that science. He accordingly derived benefit from the lectures which were delivered at Sorbonne; he assisted at the disputations, which were publicly held in that learned establishment; he joined in the private discussions, which occasionally took place between his

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Life of St. Fran. Book I.

preceptor and other theologians ; and he acquired so much skill in that intricate and abstruse science, which is fully sufficient to engross one mind, as if it had occupied his undivided attention.

When he had completed his philosophical studies, his preceptor, by the express direction of the Count of Sales, placed him in an academy, where he might acquire the accomplishments of riding, of fencing, of dancing, and whatever was proper for a young nobleman of distinguished rank. The young Count, who was predetermined to engage in the church, gave his mind with considerable reluctance to these pursuits, which he conceived would be unattended with any advantage respecting his future views ; but as he made it an inviolable maxim, to sacrifice his judgment to the will of his parents, he made great proficiency in these ornamental arts, and acquired that easy carriage and disengaged deportment, which he ever after united, with the modest simplicity so peculiar to his character.

But as these exercises formed rather an amusement, than a serious occupation, he not only reviewed the studies of his youth, but applied to the Hebrew and Greek languages ; he cultivated positive divinity under Genebrardus and Maldonatus, who at that time taught at Paris with

great reputation. Six years were devoted to these pursuits. The result of this application, was such a variety of knowledge, and such skill in science, as perhaps has not been sufficiently admired ; since the profound humility, which he assiduously cultivated, induced him to conceal his attainments from the observation of mankind. But the following history will furnish so clear and demonstrative proofs of this observation, that he will readily be admitted to have been one of the most learned as well as of the most holy prelates of the age in which he lived.

During this period, the pursuits which we have mentioned, by no means formed the sole, not even the principal occupation of this distinguished youth. He spent a considerable portion of time in the exercises of piety : that was always his leading concern ; he was fully sensible, that true devotion never interfered with any business ; and that the time which is spent in serving God, draws abundant blessings on all that is undertaken for His glory. This was the only end, to which all the actions of the young Count were uniformly directed. On his arrival at Paris, he placed himself under the conduct of a skilful director, to whom he unreservedly gave his confidence ; and without whose advice, he undertook nothing of any moment. He well knew, that if a guide is

wanted on a journey through an unknown country, such assistance is more indispensably requisite in the road to heaven; that our situation in this instance is more embarrassing, as we meet with more obstacles, and carry with us seeds of corruption, which it is not easy to destroy. By the advice of his director, he assiduously read the holy scripture; an exercise, which afforded him inexpressible delight. In order more perfectly to understand the divine oracles, he acquired with incredible labour a knowledge of the Hebrew language, which is scarcely useful for any other purpose. With the holy scriptures, he constantly read the well known book, entitled "The Spiritual Combat." He was assiduous in hearing the word of God; he sought the company of virtuous persons; and was peculiarly delighted with the father Angelus Joyeuse, who, on his part, was much struck with the innocent and virtuous disposition of the young Count, and always received the greatest gratification from his company. * This distinguished personage, instilled into his mind a contempt of the world, with very considerable effect, as he himself had enjoyed whatever was attractive, and had despised its fleeting allurements. He was therefore enabled to speak with more force of that peace of mind, which he had

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Life of St. Francis. Book I.

never found in grandeur, in pleasure, or in the most seductive charms, which the world had presented to his view. He often repeated to him, that nothing is more incompatible with the practice of virtue, than idleness and effeminacy; that a penitential life is not only necessary to repair faults, which have been committed, but that it contributes to the preservation of innocence; that in consequence of the violent propensity, which men have, to abuse liberty, it is often expedient to suffer a privation of that blessing; and that this consideration had induced him openly to abandon the world, in order to be secured from any farther temptation of adopting its maxims.

These communications with the father Angelus, induced the young Count to add to his ordinary devotions the practice of wearing a hair shirt, three days in the week. It is highly probable, that the same cause led him to make a vow of perpetual chastity; a circumstance, in his life, which took place in the church of St. Stephen des Grez; where he was fond of performing his devotions, as it is a place, but little frequented, and calculated for retirement and contemplation. There prostrate on the ground, and engaged for a considerable time in the most fervent prayer, in the attitude of an humble supplicant, he begged of God, that agreeably to the advice of the Apostle,

he might be permitted to relinquish all thoughts of matrimony; that the sacrifice of his body might be accepted, as that of his heart had, by the Divine grace, been made; and that he might be endued with sufficient strength to persevere in so holy a resolution. He then placed himself under the particular protection of the Blessed Virgin; he besought her to be his advocate before God, and to obtain for him those graces, without which, the sacred scriptures had taught him, that all our efforts to preserve chastity would be unavailing.* After making this vow, he formed the resolution of communicating every eight days, from conviction, that this heavenly bread of the blessed Eucharist, would constitute his strength, and that the wine which inebriates virgins, would support his weakness against all the efforts of his enemies.

He expected an attack in that quarter, which he had been careful to strengthen; but his trial proved to be of such a nature, as to defeat his calculations. Spiritual darkness gradually overcast his mind; disquietude took possession of his heart; a violent agitation succeeded to the peace, which he had enjoyed till that period; this restless feeling, was followed by a general disgust for all, that had hitherto formed the chaste delight of his

1 Cor. c. 7.

soul. Spiritual dryness succeeded to this disgust, and rendered him insensible to the truths and the consolations of religion. God, who had retired to the centre of his heart, had, if I may so express it, abandoned the exterior part to a furious assault. The enemy of our salvation, whom the scripture represents, sometimes as a lion, that makes a violent attack, and at others as a serpent, that labours to seduce by artifice, did not lose this occasion; but suggested to him that all his efforts to please God were unavailing; that his eternal perdition was decreed, and that he was already ranked among the reprobate.* The young Count, was filled with those dreadful alarms, which a supposed certainty of reprobation is capable of exciting in a soul, that fears God, and that had always aspired to the happiness of eternally enjoying him. As his love to God was of the most tender and affectionate kind, he was tortured with inexpressible grief, whenever he reflected that he was doomed to hate, and blaspheme him for all eternity; and his thoughts were perpetually turned to that melancholy subject.† The fear of hell, the agitation of his mind, and his unappeasable solicitude, at length threw him into a settled me-

* Maupas Life of St. Francis, Part I. c. 5.

† Charles Aug. of Sales, Life of St. Francis, Book I.
Riviere *ibid.* anon, *ibid.*

lancholy, which admitted of no alleviation; he spent the days in tears, and the nights in groans and lamentations. His constitution, though robust, at length began to sink under so severe a trial; a jaundice very generally spread itself over his whole frame; he completely lost all inclination for food and for rest. Unequivocal marks of the most frightful despair, were observable in his countenance; and the acute pains, which he experienced in all his members, brought his life into the most imminent danger. Those who have never experienced the effects, which may be produced in a soul that loves God, by the expectation of losing him for ever, will suspect this to be an exaggerated statement. But nothing can be better authenticated; and there is not one of the biographers of *St. Francis of Sales*, who has not described the effects of this violent temptation in the manner here recorded.

His preceptor, who loved him with the tenderness of a parent, knew not what judgment to form of the melancholy situation to which he saw him reduced. He laboured to discover the cause, and frequently asked for an explanation, but without effect. Shame induced the young Count resolutely to conceal it; and nothing appeared to him so dreadful, as to be constrained to acknowledge, that he was a reprobate. Could the awkward

shame, which invariably accompanies conflicts of this nature, be removed, the cure would be by no means difficult; an humble declaration of the case, to an enlightened person, would often be found sufficient to remove the temptation. A resolute determination to conceal the disorder, adds to its force and to its duration.

But God, who permitted this temptation, only for the trial of his servant, to teach him a becoming distrust of his own strength, and to inspire him with sentiments of humility, a virtue so indispensably requisite for the preservation of the eminent sanctity, to which he was called, delivered him without the intervention of man, from this violent conflict. He secretly inspired him with the purpose of returning to the church of St. Stephen des Grez, where he had before made his vow of chastity. The first object which presented itself to his view, in that place, was a picture of the Blessed Virgin. The sight of this, awakened the confidence, which he had always reposed in her powerful intercession; he threw himself prostrate on the ground, and acknowledging himself unworthy of making a direct address to the Father of mercies, to the God of all consolation, he desired her to be his advocate before the throne of grace, to obtain his deliverance from the evil, with which he was overwhelmed, and to beseech

the Almighty, that as he was so unfortunate as to be doomed after death to hate him for an eternity, he might at least be permitted to love him with his whole heart, during his life.* A prayer, so remote from the sentiments of a reprobate, and which cannot rationally be charged with a want of hope, was instantly heard. The young Count afterwards acknowledged, that he had no sooner finished it, than he seemed to feel an oppressive weight removed from his heart. He in a moment recovered the tranquillity of his mind, and the peace of his soul. His whole frame betrayed the change; and he returned home so visibly improved, that his preceptor and his friends were more at a loss than ever to discover the cause of the disorder, and of this sudden alleviation. The young Count, who was then only sixteen years old, without hesitation related the history of both; and his friends on their part acknowledged, that they imagined some passion, which he was unable to gratify, to have been the cause, that led to the deplorable situation, in which he had appeared. His preceptor added, that he had tortured his imagination without effect, to discover the origin of the complaint; and blaming him for the untoward reserve, which made him conceal his interior sufferings, obtained a promise, that he would never repeat that conduct

* Maupas, *ibid.* Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

in future. But any similar occasion of shewing his confidence, never afterwards occurred; the peace of mind, which he had just recovered, was never more disturbed; and from that moment he enjoyed the happy tranquillity, which the intercession of the Blessed Virgin had obtained.

In the mean time, the Count of Sales being informed, that his son had completed his studies, gave directions that he should proceed to visit the most distinguished towns of France, and return to Savoy after this tour. But the disturbed state of the kingdom at that time, was unpropitious to such a plan, and his travels were by consequence soon concluded. The civil war was still carried on with undiminished fury. The Duke of Alençon was just dead without issue; the King had lost all hope of having an heir; and the various motions of the different competitors to the crown, filled the kingdom with tumult and distraction. Henry of Navarre, afterwards Henry IV. stated his claims, as the nearest heir; he was befriended by the Calvinists of France, Queen Elizabeth of England, and the protestant princes of Germany, all ready to support his pretensions. The princes of the house of Guise, set forward by the league which at that time was become powerful, and by the King of Spain, maintained in appearance the right of the Cardinal of Bourbon, but in reality aimed

at the possession of the crown. The Queen dowager, Catharine of Medicis, who during a long regency, had considerably increased the number of her partizans, was ambitious of placing on the throne, in defiance of the salic law, the children of her daughter, who had married the Prince of Lorraine. Henry III. formed a fourth party. He was extremely indignant, that before his life was much extended, there should arise a dispute about the succession; and this party, which having authority on its side, might be presumed to possess the greatest strength, was in effect the weakest. It is not difficult to form an idea of the confusion, the tumult and disorders, which the opposite pretensions of so many claimants must have produced. The provinces, the towns, the country, the nobility, the parliaments were all divided in their views; some adhering to one party, some to another; and there appeared evident symptoms of such internal convulsions, as seemed likely to terminate in the ruin of the kingdom. As the contending parties, were not yet engaged in an appeal to the sword, it was not difficult for the young Count to reach Savoy without hazard.

He was at this time,* eighteen years old; of a genteel appearance, and distinguished by the rapid

* 1584.

progress, which he had made in virtue and learning ; circumstances which rendered him extremely dear to the Count and Countess of Sales. She was induced to think, that nothing was to separate her from her son, and that she might enjoy in tranquillity the fruits of the excellent education, which he had received. But the Count of Sales had more extensive views. He considered that little would be done, by leaving to his heir extensive possessions, and high rank, unless the most ample means were furnished for supporting the splendour arising from those advantages. This reflection determined him to send his son to Padua, to study the law, where the famous Pancyrrola, taught it with a reputation, which attracted students from every part of Europe.

The Countess of Sales consented to this project with reluctance ; but as she always made it an invariable rule to obey the will of her husband, and he on his side, gave very substantial reasons for a measure, which was to deprive them of the company of a son, equally dear to both, the young Count proceeded to Padua, under the same preceptor, in a very short time after his arrival at Sales.

Padua, an episcopal see of the state of Venice, under the patriarchate of Aquileia, is the most ancient city of Italy. Venice, and even Rome itself, possess not the same claim to antiquity.

Padua has always been admired for its extent, for the elegance of its buildings, for its situation, which is eminently beautiful, for the fertility of its soil, for the great men, whom it has occasionally produced, and particularly for its university, one of the most celebrated in Europe. It was in the height of its reputation, when the young Count of Sales was sent thither; but among the great men drawn to so celebrated a spot, by the renown which it enjoyed, the famous Guy Pancyrola, and the learned Jesuit Possevinus, were deservedly placed in the first rank. Francis of Sales engaged one to teach him the law; the other he chose for his spiritual director: and this great man, so distinguished by his learning, and rendered so illustrious by the important negotiations, entrusted to him by different Popes, in Sweden, in Poland, in Muscovy, did not consider it a task, unworthy of his attention, to be the guide of a young student, of whom he was permitted by the spirit of God to know, that he was called to be an eminent Saint, and to prove one of the greatest prelates of the Church. As he was one day conversing with him on the subject of his studies, the young Count fully opened his mind, and declared, that whatever predilection he might have for the law, he felt a stronger propensity to theological pursuits. The father Possevinus replied, that his attachment to sacred studies was perfectly rational;

that they would be more beneficial to him, than the study of the law; that God had destined him not to harangue at the bar, but to carry his word to rebellious nations, and to be the support of religion, and of the faith, in his own country; that his application should be directed to the attainments necessary for so sublime a charge; that knowledge without virtue, or virtue without knowledge was equally insufficient; * that those who were required only to sanctify themselves, might be satisfied with becoming good characters; that God demanded more of those, whom he called to the ministry of the word; that the lips of priests should be the guardians of knowledge; and that, as they should be the oracles of the people, they ought to be ready to give an answer, on a great variety of intricate questions, on which they might expect to be consulted. He added, that he knew, by his own experience, in the different journies which he had performed by the orders of his Holiness, in the states of protestant princes, that the ignorance of the clergy had contributed more to the progress of heresy in the last century, than the licentious morals of the people; that in reality heretics were rather presumptuous than learned; and that they were indebted for their wonderful success, to the pro-

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Life of St. Francis, Book I.

found ignorance, which was spread over Europe at their first appearance.

The father Possevinus, who had discovered in the young Count a wonderful fund of ingenuity and good sense, was not satisfied with giving his advice; he offered his service to direct his studies, as well as his conscience. Every day he allowed him two hours of his time, when he explained to him the Sum of St. Thomas; they likewise read together the controversies with which Cardinal Bellarmin had just favoured the public; he showed him the force of the objections and of the answers, and trained him to eloquence, of which he was himself an eminent master. The young Count corresponded with the care and attention of the father Possevinus, by a degree of labour and application, sufficient to surmount obstacles, with which he had not to contend. There is therefore no reason for surprise at the great success, which afterwards attended his communications with Calvinists; it cannot wholly be attributed to that engaging meekness, which in many instances proved so efficacious. The heart on those occasions, is gained only when the understanding is convinced; meekness may subdue obstinacy; but knowledge alone can overcome error, and beat down those obstacles, which talents

united with pride, oppose to the progress of truth.

But the attention of the father Possevinus to the young Count, was by no means confined to the purpose of making him a learned man. He found in him a heart according to God; a heart pure, humble, and docile; a heart, which seemed formed by Divine Grace for the practice of the most exalted virtues. He laboured to cultivate and strengthen it against any impressions which might tarnish its purity; he taught his pupil to look up to God in all things; to raise his heart to him by the means of creatures, which are but too frequently the occasions of estranging us from him; freely to profess that nothing happens but agreeably to his foreknowledge, his will or his permission; he trained him to the exercise of prayer, of meditation, of contemplation; finally, he admitted him to all the secrets of that divine art, the conduct of souls; he omitted nothing to qualify him for the great designs, which he perceived God had, respecting so excellent a character. The rules of conduct both for a spiritual and social life, observed by Francis with the utmost rigour at Padua, are still preserved, and appear to have been given by this pious and learned religious.

This communication of Francis of Sales with the father Possevinus, did not impede his application to the canon and civil laws. His success in these pursuits, was considerably forwarded by the attention of Pancyrola, who, charmed with the brightness of his parts, the regularity of his conduct, his diligent and steady application, took the greatest delight, independently of the public lectures, in giving him private instructions. This partiality, manifested by so great a man, excited the jealousy of some, who looked upon the regular life of Francis, as a secret reflection on their own disorders. They were induced to believe, that the retired life, which he led, proceeded from a natural timidity or want of spirit, and that it was not possible so much reserve could be united with any share of resolution and courage.* On this false principle, a party agreed to attack him in a retired place, as he was returning one evening from his usual walk; it was supposed that he would seek safety by flight, and that his credit would be lost. But the young Count, who knew that self-defence is perfectly justifiable, put his hand to his sword, and prepared to repel the assault in a manner, which was not expected. On this, the ruffians alleged, that they had mistaken his person, made an ample apology, and retired in astonishment at his courage.†

* Charles Aug. of Sales, Life of St. Fran. Book I. † Ibid.

This adventure was followed by another of a delicate nature, which throws such a lustre on the virtue of the young Count, that it deserves to be recorded. The scrupulous attention to chastity, which he invariably shewed, had frequently been the subject of conversation among his fellow students; who could never believe, that a young man, in his twentieth year, of his personal accomplishments, could be possessed of that gravity of manners, which he affected: they therefore resolved to expose his virtue to a dangerous trial. There was, at that time, at Padua, a famous courtesan, who had lately proceeded thither from Naples. She was young, handsome, and witty; and there was not one of these unfortunate youths who planned the adventure, that had not experienced the impression of her charms. They spoke to her much of the young Count of Sales; gave a lively description of his person, his youth and his rank; and omitted no inducement to engage this wretched woman, to attempt his ruin. With her they concerted the means of leading him into the snare, and left her with a promise of introducing him on the first occasion. The attempt would not have been easy, could he have penetrated the design. But that was a secret, which they kept out of view; and in the visit, which they paid him, they spoke in the highest terms of commendation, of an eminent Doctor of laws, who had lately arrived at Padua;

they assured him, that he was a prodigy of science, and that Pancyrola, in comparison of him, was but a scholar. This was sufficient to excite in the young Count, a desire of forming an acquaintance with this supposed character. They offered to introduce him; he accepted the offer, and was led to the house of the courtezan, being taught to suppose, that it was the doctor's abode. The courtezan, assumed the character of his daughter, and came to receive them; she said that her father was engaged in his study, in a consultation of considerable importance, with some persons of quality, and that he had commissioned her to entertain them, till he could be disengaged to see them himself. The conversation was scarcely begun, before those, who had introduced the young Count, retired on different pretexts, and left him only in her company. It would be dangerous to give a detail of what passed in this interview; it is sufficient to relate, that the courtezan carried her bold and insidious arts to the utmost height; and that God gave the Count strength to resist and preserve his virtue.

The rage of this woman, on seeing her charms slighted, cannot be better conceived, than by the means which she took, to inflict vengeance. She raised an alarm, that a thief was in the house, and collected her neighbours to her assistance, who

were ready to drag the young Count to prison; when his companions, who had remained at a small distance, came in time to rescue him from their hands. The young Count thanked them for that part of their conduct; but informed them, that he was not so simple, as to be duped by the artifice which had been prepared; and from that hour he abstained from all communication with young men of that description. This adventure rendered him more cautious in the choice of those, with whom he conversed.

* But God sometimes permits that occasions should be presented to those, who take every precaution to avoid them. There was at that time at Padua, an Italian princess, whose domestic concerns had drawn her to that celebrated place. History has not preserved her name, but we are told that she was extremely rich, and that she spared no expence, when her inclinations led her to sensual indulgence. She one day met the young Count in a church; as the ceremony which detained her there, was long, she had full time, attentively to examine his person. She was enchanted with his graceful appearance; and formed a resolution of satisfying her passion, whatever might be the event. On leaving the church, she

* Charles Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

ordered him to be followed to his abode; and obtained in the neighbourhood every sort of information which could be collected; she learned who he was, and what was the purpose of his residence at Padua; but to her sorrow she heard, that he led a very retired life; that he openly practised virtue, with the utmost rigour; that he had no sort of communication with the softer sex; that it had been observed, that he avoided females as far as civility permitted him, and that he was judged incapable of an intrigue.

This information led the princess almost to despair of success in her nefarious design. But there are some instances of passion, which difficulties serve but to arouse and enflame; the princess was in this situation. She fondly imagined, that the steadiness of the young Count would be shaken by her offers; that money would complete her purpose, and that he would finally open to her the avenues of his heart. Whatever attachment Francis discovered to retirement and seclusion, he occasionally frequented the society of those among his fellow students, in whom he observed any peculiar virtue, talents or application to study; they now and then partook of the amusement of a walk, and sometimes joined in innocent recreations, which, without injuring piety, contribute to unbend the mind, and give it additional vigour.

To give the real character of the Count, his virtue was not of that austere and repulsive kind, which disqualifies men for society. No person was ever more agreeable and entertaining in conversation; he was even fond of innocent and unoffending raillery, and his good humour blended with sweetness, carried with it such a charm, that his company was very generally courted. But among those who were honoured with his friendship, there was one person, whom he treated with peculiar regard; a similitude of temper, of studies and disposition, had formed between them the closest union. The Count entertained the most perfect conviction of the solidity of his virtue; but it requires very consummate steadiness to resist the artifices and offers of persons of rank, who spare nothing to effect their purpose. This young man suffered himself to be gained by the princess; her presents dazzled his senses, her promises corrupted his heart, and in conjunction with her, he conspired against the innocence of his friend, giving the fullest assurance, that nothing should be wanting on his part, to hasten the gratification of her passion.

To make a proposal of this nature to the Count, was a task full of embarrassment. But judging of the disposition of his friend by his own, and supposing that he would never resist the inviting

offers, which he was commissioned to make, he at length ventured to open the dark business, to speak to him of the princess, of the passionate attachment, which she had conceived to him, and of the offer, which he was authorised to make him by her direction, of her person, and the immense treasures, which it was universally known, she enjoyed. On his part, he promised, that the intrigue should remain a profound secret; that it should never injure his reputation; and he added, that his friend must be aware as well as himself, that the offer of such favours by persons of so eminent rank, could never be rejected with impunity; that a woman of her consequence, whose amorous sallies should be slighted, was capable of proceeding to any extremity, in order to revenge the contempt so shown; and that he trembled at the idea of those dangers, with which he would be threatened, if he should be weak or imprudent enough not to avail himself of the proposed occasion, which every one besides himself would purchase at a great price. The Count was so astonished at the language of his false friend, that he did not interrupt him in opening this singular business. But having reflected, that he had suffered him already to proceed too far; that temptation steals upon us not less by the hearing than the sight, and that it is always dangerous to listen, to what cannot be proposed, without the commission of a

crime, he at length exclaimed: "What have I done to you, O cruel friend? Or rather, what has God done to you, that you should unite your efforts with those of his enemies, to destroy a soul; which you know is redeemed by His sacred blood? He has done as much for your immortal soul; and that consideration should have diverted you from making me such a proposal. You may say to the princess what you please; but as for me, I solemnly declare to you, that I will have no farther communication with you, and that I will never have any with her." * This firm declaration, was a stroke of thunder to this perfidious friend; he walked off in the utmost embarrassment and confusion, and was afterwards heard to say, that his fortune was made, if he could have engaged the Count to comply with the wishes of the princess. But he was so far from taking so fatal a step, that from an apprehension of fresh assaults, and from fear of giving any countenance to the enemies of his salvation, he redoubled his prayers and his penitential exercises. With sentiments of self-condemnation, he believed, that his want of gratitude for the multiplied graces with which he had been favoured, and his deficiency in corresponding with the effects of the Divine bounty, had given birth to these frightful temptations.

* Ibid.

The fatal disorders, into which his companions fell, of which daily accounts reached him, inspired him with a salutary distrust in his own strength: their weakness reminded him of his own; he considered with dread the dangers with which he was surrounded; powerful enemies without, more dreadful foes within himself, excited his pious fears. From these reflections he formed a just conclusion that, as God alone could be his support, he had to place in him unlimited confidence; and that this reliance on the Divine bounty would be unavailing, if correspondence should be wanting on his part, and if he did not adhere to him with an exclusive predilection. It is thus, that all events contribute to the advantage of those, who seek God with sincerity of heart: those trials, which subdue the constancy of others, tend to fortify them more securely in sentiments of Divine love; and the business of their salvation is even promoted, by enemies, who had plotted their ruin. As the young Count, with the increase of his austerities, abated nothing of his ardour for study, his close application heated his blood to that degree, that he was seized with a serious illness. A violent and continual fever brought his life into danger, and a dysentery, which followed, removed all hopes of his recovery.* The physi-

* Charles Augustus of Sales, *ibid.*

cians of Padua, the most skilful in Italy, were employed without success; their art discovered no remedy, equal to the violence of the disorder. The report of this dangerous illness, and the reputation which Francis had gained, attracted the visits and inquiries of the most distinguished persons of the town; a general feeling was excited in favour of a young nobleman of his appearance and accomplishments, destined to the enjoyment of a great fortune, thus about to expire in a foreign land, at a distance from his relatives, and at a time, when he was going to reap the fruit of his juvenile labours and pursuits. He alone, insensible to these untoward circumstances, intent solely on the affair of his salvation, calm and composed at the sight of the Divine favours, which he had so often experienced, eager to profit by the exhortations of the father Possevinus, who never left him, consoled his friends, and spoke of his dissolution, as an event which he had more reason to desire than to dread. His disorder had now considerably gained ground, and the hopes of life were proportionably diminished, when he received the last sacraments, with such transports of fervour, as induced the spectators to apprehend, that he would expire in that solemn act of devotion.

During this awful uncertainty, his preceptor, who bore him the most cordial affection, was over-

whelmed with grief, on considering the loss, which the house of Sales, was about to suffer, as well as that which so nearly interested himself; for, from the excellent dispositions of the Count, he was induced to suppose, that he might depend on uninterrupted protection and support. He, however, so far suppressed his feelings, as to ask his pupil, what directions he had to give respecting his remains in the event of dissolution. The Count replied, that he had always viewed with extreme concern, the profane conduct of the students in medicine, who were perpetually plundering the church-yards of dead bodies for anatomical purposes; that he had witnessed the barbarities and murders, which had taken place on such occasions, between these persons and the relatives of the deceased, who so justly interposed to prevent those practices; that in consequence of these horrors, his own directions were, that his body should be given up for the purposes of dissection; that he should feel extremely happy at the thought, that having been useless during life, he might be of some service after his death.

After this charitable direction, the only one which he had to give, he appeared to think no more of the affairs of the world, but employed his mind wholly in heavenly contemplation. The sight of a happy eternity, which he expected from

the mercies of God, excited the most ardent, not to say impatient desires, for the short time he had to live; but his hour was not come; and while his attendants were waiting for the moment of expiration, he fell into a gentle sleep, which lasted a considerable time, when he awoke, free from fever. His recovery was considered miraculous; and what gave weight to this opinion, he shortly regained his strength, and was restored to perfect health. But this event, which gave him again to the world, eventually contributed to separate him from it for ever; for from that hour, he formed a fixed resolution of renouncing it, to embrace the ecclesiastical state.* It was his firm conviction, that God had restored him to health, solely to employ him in his service; and that he could in no other manner testify his gratitude for the favour, than by living only for Him. Nothing could ever divert him from the execution of this purpose; and the course of the following history will explain the manner, in which he carried it into effect.

He now resumed his exercises of piety with the same fervour, and his studies with the same application. Having in a short time, completed his course, and passed his degrees preparatory to the rank of doctor, he took the cap with the solemnity usual on

* Ibid.

those occasions. Pancyrola claimed the honour of making the complimentary address, in which he spoke of him in the most flattering terms of commendation, for the brilliant example of virtue, which he had displayed to the whole university; he proposed him as a model to the numerous portion of generous youths, who were aspiring to the same honour, and he ventured to predict, that he would one day become the glory of his country, of the church, and of the illustrious house of Sales.

* The young Count was now twenty-four years old, and his late illness had contributed to improve his health and appearance. He began to think of returning to Savoy, in order to avoid the dangers, to which he was necessarily exposed in a town so corrupted as Padua, when he received an express from the Count of Sales, with orders to commence the tour of Italy. He departed instantly for Ferrara, and thence proceeded to Rome, where he purposed to make a considerable stay, and enjoy the society of those numerous friends, whom his father had taken the precaution to secure.†

Of this great city, he surveyed the curiosities with the utmost exactness; he examined the anci-

* 1591.

† Ibid.

ent monuments of Roman grandeur, the circuses, the theatres, the triumphal arches, the trophies, the porticoes, the columns, the pyramids, the statues, the paintings, and all the splendid remains of departed greatness, which have escaped the waste of time, and the more destructive rage of barbarians; remains, by which the masters of the Roman world hoped to secure immortality to their names. But all these monuments he viewed, with sentiments, which true piety usually inspires. He admired in these wrecks of Roman vanity, the constant vicissitudes of prosperous and of adverse fortune; the flourishing and the calamitous state of mankind; the original, the progress, and the decline of empires; he considered with much feeling, that they rapidly succeed to each other, and are formed of the wrecks of those, which preceded them; that the vanquished finally become masters of those, by whom they had been subdued; but that amidst these vicissitudes and continual revolutions to which human affairs are subject, God alone is always the same, free, independent, ruling all things, Himself uncontrolled by any law. He reflected with astonishment, how the Christian religion had been established on the ruins of this powerful empire, which for many ages had employed its resources for its destruction; and how by various and innumerable changes, Rome, after having been

so long the mistress of error, had at length become the centre of truth.

But as he was less intent to gratify curiosity, however innocent, than to cherish piety and devotion in his soul, and as he viewed whatever becomes an object of research to the traveller, more to satisfy the wishes of his father, who had requested an account of his tour, his attention in this illustrious city was principally directed to the churches and the catacombs. These are burying places, or subterraneous cavities, where the first Christians, in times of persecution, interred the bodies of the martyrs, and even celebrated the Divine mysteries. At the sight of those places, consecrated by the piety of our forefathers, and watered with the blood of so many distinguished witnesses of truth, who generously sacrificed their lives in defence of that faith, of which we are now in the honourable and undisturbed enjoyment, he was invigorated with fresh courage to defend the truth against its enemies; he formed new plans for the conversion of heretics on his return to his own country; and by a secret preconception, that he was one day to be Bishop of that city, which is the centre of error, as Rome is of truth, he made an offering to God of his fortune, of his time, of his studies, and even of his life, if it should be necessary for the re-establishment of the ancient religion.

On this occasion, he experienced a very striking demonstration of a known truth, that God never forsakes those who seek him ; while he consigns to destruction in a thousand different ways, those whom he has abandoned to the desires of their hearts. As he was returning one evening, extremely fatigued with visiting these holy places, to a lodging which he had taken on the banks of the Tiber, he found his servants engaged in an altercation with the landlord. The subject of the dispute arose, from a peremptory desire of the landlord, that they should go and find another lodging, in order to make place for some persons of distinction, whose equipage had just arrived. The contest had been confined to high and animated language ; but the affair would not have terminated so easily, if the Count, who was meekness itself, had not given instant orders, that the wishes of the landlord should be gratified. It was then necessary to look out for another lodging ; and that unpleasant circumstance was by no means an accommodation to the Count, in the state of fatigue, which he then experienced : but God, permitted this event only to deliver him from a danger, in which he must inevitably have perished. Scarcely had he reached a fresh lodging, when the most tremendous rain succeeded, which lasted the whole night ; the Tiber, which before had been much swollen, overflowed its banks,

and carried away the house, which he had left, with all its inhabitants. Not a single person was saved; and when the inundation had ceased, not a vestige appeared of one of the best inns in Rome.

The Count some days after left Rome, to go to Loretto, an episcopal town of the ecclesiastical state, the bishopric of which is united to that of Reccanati. * He had engaged himself by vow some years before to perform this journey, and he now carried his purpose into effect, with his usual piety;† he there renewed the vow of perpetual chastity, which he had made at Paris, and the resolution which he had formed at Padua, of engaging in the ecclesiastical state. The historians of his life, agree in relating, that in this venerable chapel he received from God, very peculiar graces; that his mind was irradiated with new lights, and that his heart was filled with ardent charity; that nothing appeared to him impossible, when the glory of God and the salvation of souls called him to action.

‡ After having satisfied his devotion, he departed for Ancona, a town on the Adriatic, with a harbour sufficiently commodious, with the design of proceeding to Venice. He there found a small

* Charles Aug. of Sales, *ibid.* † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.*

vessel, ready to sail. It had been hired purposely for a lady of quality, who was going to Venice, attended by a considerable retinue of servants and dependants. She had made this stipulation with the master, who perhaps struck with the appearance and manners of the young Count, or induced by the hopes of gain, admitted him into the ship. The lady by whom the vessel had been exclusively hired, came soon after, and perceiving a certain number of strangers, who belonged not to her company, discovered much discomposure, and hastily desired the master to dismiss them. The young Count, in the most civil manner, entreated her to be permitted to take the advantage of her vessel; he said, that he had only three servants, and but little baggage; that he should not be troublesome; that he should be satisfied with any part of the vessel, which she should be pleased to assign; that the most inconvenient part would be good enough for him, and that he was in great danger of being detained for a considerable time, if she did not allow him the honour of sailing in her vessel. The master and his company, joined in this rational request. But the unrelenting temper of the lady was not softened by these entreaties; she dismissed him in disgrace from the ship, and seemed much disposed to order his baggage to be thrown into the sea. The Count bore this affront with his usual meekness. His preceptor and his servants

discovered a degree of resentment, which they were unable to conceal; but the Count, with that air of tranquillity, which never left him, inculcated to them the necessity of submitting to the will of God; he observed that those things, which happen apparently by chance, are to be ascribed to a particular order of Divine Providence; and he desired them to recollect what had taken place at Rome, when they had been constrained to quit their lodgings. "This sea," added he, "is much subject to tempests; and all who leave this port, are not to expect to reach their destination."

The event justified his prediction. The sky was serene, the air tranquil, the wind favourable, the sea calm; and every circumstance appeared to promise a prosperous voyage. Suddenly after their departure, the wind changed to a contrary direction, and became extremely violent; the sky was overcast with dark clouds, and a most tremendous storm took place. The ship was exposed to the fury of the waves, and made the utmost efforts to return to port, but without success; * it sunk in the sight of the Count and his servants, who were viewing it from the beach, and every person on board perished.

* Charles Augustus of Sales, *ibid.*

This mournful spectacle afforded the Count an additional motive, to place all his confidence in God, and to abandon himself without reserve, to the orders of His Providence. He considered with admiration, how that beneficent Providence, conducts all events to their destined close, by ways, which are imperceptible and unknown to the prudence of men; how that, which appears the effect of chance, the fortuitous result of second causes, and which seems contrary to all the rules of human wisdom, is very wisely ordained, and always displays either the mercy or the justice of the Almighty.

* In the mean time, the tempest ceased; the air became calm, the sea was unruffled, and the Count found an opportunity of embarking. The hope of a prosperous voyage, diffused joy among the passengers. The master, the sailors, and the whole company, thought only of amusement and festivity: the Count alone, whose preconceptions were seldom without foundation, appeared pensive, and took no part in what was passing in the vessel. His preceptor observed his conduct, and asked for an explanation. "I am filled," replied he, "with astonishment, to see, that, while a plank only of an inconsiderable thickness, separates us from the

* Ibid.

abyss, these persons can indulge in such excessive joy. We have just witnessed a fatal shipwreck; nothing can be more subject to change than the sea; this gulph is known to be much exposed to storms; and who can assure us that we are not threatened with a disaster, similar to that which has taken place before our eyes? "Let us address our prayers," added he, "to Him who commands the winds and the sea, and leave to others, the indulgence of profane mirth, so little suitable to the situation in which we are placed." His preceptor, who had a high esteem for his virtue, and was himself a man of singular piety, asked him to recite with him the Divine office. Scarce had they begun their devotions, when the master, who observed their proceeding, began to turn them into ridicule, declaring, that monks and devotees had always brought him some disaster. The wind suddenly changed, and a storm scarce inferior in violence, to that which had before happened, shortly took place. The mirth, which had prevailed on board, was now converted into fear and despair; not one of the passengers was so preposterously bold, as to decline the resource of fervent prayer. The master, persisting in his savage conduct, and uttering the most horrid blasphemies, declared that his predictions had been verified; that these reciters of long prayers had brought on the storm, and that they ought to

be thrown into the sea. The Count's preceptor, whose feelings were naturally acute, was much struck at his insolence; and wished to make some reply, and reprove him for his blasphemies; but the Count checked him in the attempt, by observing that any remonstrance would serve only to exasperate the evil; and suffered with incredible patience the injurious language, which he continued to hold.

The ship was however preserved from the violence of the sea; the storm ceased, and the company arrived safe at the harbour of Catholica. The master could not conceal the joy, which he experienced on his wonderful escape from the danger he had encountered; and the Count availed himself of this moment of transport, to reprove him for the blasphemies which he had uttered. He spoke to him with much energy on the subject, and at the same time, with great mildness. The brutal disposition of this man, did not prevent him from observing, that the Count, insensible to every consideration, but the offence against God, said nothing of the personal injuries against himself; he could not but admire such consummate moderation; he accused himself of what the Count had omitted to lay to his charge, he cast himself at his feet, humbly asked his pardon, and promised to amend his conduct. It is thus that a season-

able and gentle reproof is generally attended with the desired effect. An inattention to the circumstance of time, and a hasty manner, will render all reprehension wholly useless. There is no remedy, which a patient may not be induced to take, if the unpleasant bitterness, which accompanies it, be skilfully removed.

The company soon embarked again, and arrived safe at Venice. The Count staid there long enough to survey the curiosities of that celebrated city, and to be enabled to comply with his father's wishes in giving an exact relation of what he observed.* There are few cities in the world more frequented by foreigners; whose attention is attracted by the striking situation of the place, its extent, its magnificence, and the uncontrolled liberty, which there prevails. The Count there met some gentlemen of Savoy and Piedmont, who like himself, had been induced to visit this place, so distinguished by its curiosities. They were subjects of the same prince, and they soon formed an acquaintance; but the Count perceiving that they indulged in the dissipation and debauchery, which prevail with less restraint at Venice than in other places, was soon led by the gravity of his manners to break off a connection, which was acci-

* Charles Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

dentally formed, and by no means supported by a similitude of dispositions. One of the number gained his confidence; but not having sufficient strength to avoid the fatal occasions of vice, and to resist the torrent of example, he soon proved unworthy of his friendship. The Count received information, which left no doubt of the fact, that unable to resist the arts of bad company, he had spent the night in a place of debauchery, which had been the scene of every excess; he accordingly determined to have no farther communication with a person of his character. But still entertaining great compassion for a soul, in which he had observed great indications of virtue, he resolved to spare no pains to rescue him from the danger, in which he was involved. He spoke to him with great energy on the fatal effects of impurity; on the punishment, which God inflicts on this vice, both in this and the next life; on final impenitence, which is a very general consequence of this sin, where the habit is completely formed; on the blindness and hardness of heart, which are its inseparable attendants; finally, he expatiated on every topic, which was likely to produce any effect on a soul, that still retains any fear of God; but he particularly dwelt on the severe judgments, which are pronounced against those, who indulge in such irregularities.

God blessed the charity of the Count with success in this undertaking; and the young man, by the united effect of Divine grace, and such pious endeavours, was reclaimed to a sense of duty, did penance in a manner proportioned to the extent of his crime, and left Venice, in order to avoid the occasions, which might have produced a relapse into his former disorders.

*The Count likewise left Venice soon after; and having completed his tour of Italy, arrived safe at the Castle of Tuille, where his family, apprised of his return, had gone to receive him. It would be difficult to describe the joy of the Count and Countess of Sales on this interesting occasion. The accounts, which they had received of their son, and their own observations contributed equally to enhance their gratification. He was at that time twenty-six years old; and it may safely be pronounced, that it would not have been easy to find a man more accomplished. In person he was tall and well proportioned; his constitution was strong, his voice sonorous, his features regular, his appearance engaging; and a general mildness, which marked his countenance and his manners, rendered the impression in his favour irresistible. The progress of this narrative, and the succeeding

* Ibid.

parts of this history, will incontestably prove, that this is by no means a flattering portrait.* His mind corresponded with the attractions of his person; his parts were solid, lively and penetrating; and he had neglected no species of culture, which could improve their natural vigour. He was well versed in languages, in philosophy, in theology, in the canon and civil laws; and so far from having neglected the study of polite literature, and of eloquence, he had enjoyed the advantage of masters, who had taught him the secret of the difficult art of persuasion; and had made such a progress, as assuredly rendered him one of the most eloquent men of his age. He spoke in public in the most graceful manner, and won by his mild and insinuating address, those whom his public discourses were unable to soften. The applause which he received at Paris, and at the court of France, the very intricate kinds of business which he conducted with success, the seventy-two thousand Calvinists,† whom he converted, will remove all doubt concerning the truth, of what is here advanced. His profound humility induced him to conceal a part of his great talents, and to rob himself of the glory due to his acquirements. The artless sim-

* Letter of the Mother de Chantal, to the Rev.
P. D. John of St. Franc.

† Bull of Canonization.

plicity of his appearance, a continual attention to do nothing for the purpose of attracting the esteem of men, his retired manner of life, which excluded all noise and splendor, have concealed from public view a great share of his eminent qualities; but the readers of this history will find sufficient proof to convince them, that he was one of the greatest prelates that God ever bestowed on his church. As however the saint is not formed by the external graces of person, not even by the qualities of the mind, but by the good use, which is made of the gifts of God, it becomes necessary to add, that the heart of Francis was upright, pure, without guile, sincere and disinterested, perfectly submissive to the orders of Divine Providence; that he invariably sought God in all things; that his grand concern was to please Him; that he was raised far above the mean desire of flattering the vanity or the passions of men; that he was generous, intrepid, willing to face the most imminent dangers, and incapable of yielding to the impressions of fear, even when death was in view, and that his conduct was marked with that meekness, which no provocation could ever subdue. Among these striking qualities, not one is so generally ascribed to him, as the last. But it is universally known, that it was by no means his natural disposition, but that he had acquired it with much difficulty, and after

many combats and victories over himself. We have his own authority for relating, that he was naturally warm and passionate; indeed a certain fire and impetuosity observable in his writings, place the fact beyond a doubt; and the petrification of his gall, which was discovered after his death, was considered as an incontestable proof of the violence, which he had offered to his own temper. But by long application in the School of a God, who was meek and humble of heart, he learned this perfection. He made that his favourite virtue, which cost him the most labour, and to which his natural inclinations were the least disposed. Grace bestowed what nature had withheld. It must absolutely have transformed him into a new man; but nothing is impossible to grace, if it finds access to such a docile heart, as Solomon asked of God, when he ranked it among the greatest blessings, which could be conferred. From these principles, and from this source have sprung those virtuous actions, those holy projects, those elevated motives, which the reader must already have remarked, and which will appear in still greater lustre, in the course of the following history.

* Scarce had Francis of Sales recovered from the fatigue of his travels, when the Count, his father,

* Charles Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

suggested to him the propriety of going to Agency, to pay his respects to Claud Granier, the bishop of Geneva. This was a pious and learned prelate, endowed with apostolic meekness and simplicity, who directed the whole force of his mind to the functions of the sacred ministry, and was an intimate friend of the Count and Countess of Sales. Possessed neither of costly furniture, nor equipage, and holding in profound contempt the pomp and splendor, which have been introduced into the church in the latter ages, he still gained the respect and reverence of all classes; to the clergy, to the nobility, and to the people, he was an object of veneration; and without any other recommendation, but what he derived from his character, he governed that great diocese, with an authority which temporal advantages could never ensure. He received the young Count in that kind and affable manner, which accompanied every action of his life; he conversed long with him, and conceived such an esteem for his character, that he began to wish for a successor, who should bear a resemblance to him. The venerable bishop was struck with the appearance of his youth, which was dignified with an uncommon degree of knowledge, and with very great natural and acquired qualities, and at the same time, displayed that modesty, that reserve, that character of virtue and discretion,

which strongly marked his actions and his conversation.

The interview which had already lasted some time, would not have been soon interrupted, if the bishop had not been told that his theologians were assembled, and that they were waiting for his Lordship, in order to commence the examination of some candidates for vacant benefices. This able and prudent prelate, made choice of none for such places, but those who were properly qualified; virtue and learning formed the sole recommendation, to which he paid any regard. The young Count wished to retire, as he thought it not becoming that a layman, with a sword by his side, should make his appearance in such an assembly; but the holy bishop detained him, and placed him in a seat next to his own. "Perhaps," said he, "you will not be so useless as you imagine, in resolving questions which may be proposed." The discussion began, and as it frequently happens on such occasions, there was much diversity of sentiment on certain questions, which produced an animated dispute. The Count listened with great attention, but without discovering any indication of a wish to deliver his sentiments.* The bishop however called for his opinion, he modestly

* Charles Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

declined to give it; but as the invitation was repeated, he unfolded the difficulty proposed with such penetration and neatness, that the whole company followed his decision. The surprize was great, to see a young nobleman, who was supposed to be engaged in pursuits congenial to his rank, capable of resolving difficulties, which had perplexed so many doctors. The bishop said to him, "I had reason, sir, to say, that your presence would not be so useless, as your modesty induced you to suppose." * After the conference was concluded, he observed, to those who were present, that this young nobleman had too much virtue and learning, to remain long in the world; that he felt a pre-conception, that he would one day be his successor, and that he hoped God in his goodness would bestow such a favour on his diocese. This reflection rendered the Count extremely dear to the worthy bishop, who always called him his son; and from that period a connection of the most intimate nature subsisted between them, which was dissolved only by the death of that excellent prelate.

But the Count of Sales had very different views for the establishment of his son; his plan was to engage him in the world by marriage, and by pro-

* Ibid.

curing for him the rank of senator, in the senate of Chamberry; a dignity, which he hoped to be soon able to ensure. For this reason, he made him a proposal to go and commence advocate in the senate of Savoy; he gave him letters for this purpose to the celebrated Antony Favre, a man of senatorian rank, who was closely connected with the house of Sales, and begged this eminent magistrate, to concur with his son in the attainment of his object.

Such a plan was by no means agreeable to the secret intentions of the young Count, nor compatible with the engagement which he had made to God, with the vow of perpetual chastity by which he had bound himself at Paris, and which he had renewed at Loretto, nor with the resolution, with which he believed the Almighty had inspired him of embracing the ecclesiastical state. He was fully determined to accomplish these obligations; and believed that his object might be compassed with more facility, as the Count of Sales had several younger children, who would hasten to possess the advantages, which he had predetermined to relinquish. But the peculiar regard, which he felt for his father, did not permit him at that time, to oppose his designs. He believed that he might take the step required, without detriment to the resolution, which he had

formed of dedicating himself wholly to God, and that a future opportunity would arrive, when he might come to an explanation with his father.

* With these views he proceeded to Chamberry. Antony Favre, who was the greatest ornament of the senate of Savoy, and was afterwards its first president, received him with that attention, due to the son of his dearest friends. He furnished him with apartments in his house, and allotted to him several hours of his time in the day, to prepare him for his admission to the honour, of which he was in pursuit. He imagined that the young Count would be in great want of his assistance; but he found that his calculation was erroneous. He therefore introduced him without delay to Pobel, the first president, and to the whole senate; who received him with every mark of esteem, and commissioned the senator Crassus, to undertake the task of his examination. This was performed with the utmost rigour; but that circumstance served only to place his abilities in a more conspicuous light. For Crassus made a very advantageous report to the senate of the result of his researches, and the young Count was admitted to the rank of advocate with an unusual degree of

* Ibid.

applause. On the day of his reception, he harangued the senate in a strain of eloquence, which excited universal admiration;† and the rumour which had been circulated, that he was soon to be honoured with the dignity of senator, attracted congratulations from every quarter. But God, who had different designs on him, gave him an ample compensation for the privation of this honour, in his intimate connection with the senator Antony Favre. This distinguished magistrate, usually known by the title of Baron of Peroges, was a native of Bourges, in the province of Bresse; he had studied at Turin, under the celebrated Anthony Manucius; and such were his attainments, that he was deservedly ranked among the greatest men of his age. On his return to Savoy, his merit made him known to the Duke his Sovereign, who gave him very considerable employments. The manner in which he had discharged the functions annexed to these, led to higher promotion. He was chief justice of Bresse, before the union of that province to France; president of the council of Genevois, senator, and finally, president of the senate of Chamberry. The most secret transactions of the state were entrusted to his management; and he invariably conducted them with that integrity and prudence, which con-

† Ibid.

stantly ensured the esteem and confidence of his sovereign. The works with which he has favoured the world, are incontestable monuments of his knowledge. His piety corresponded with his talents; and this degree of merit produced such an intimate connection with Francis of Sales, as no event could ever dissolve. The effects of this friendship will appear in the following history.

The young Count, a few days after his admission to the rank of advocate, left Chamberry; but on his return he experienced in the wood of Sonnas an accident, which deserves to be recorded. As he was engaged in close conversation with his preceptor, who has already been mentioned, his horse suddenly stumbled to that degree, that though an experienced horseman, he was brought to the ground.* The same circumstance happened thrice before he left the wood, though he experienced no hurt or inconvenience from the fall; but as often as he attempted to place himself again on horseback, he observed that the violence of his fall had shaken his sword from the scabbard, that the scabbard was separated from the belt,† and that at each time the sword and scabbard formed a cross as exactly, as if they had been designedly placed in that position.

* Ibid.

† Ibid.

Francis perceived the circumstance, and told his preceptor to remark it: he was at that time, and indeed in every part of his life extremely remote from superstition; but his attention was constantly directed to every event, which by any construction could indicate the Divine will. He believed that God had suggested to him by this circumstance, which is indeed somewhat singular, that he was not to proceed in forming any engagement in the world; that he was called to follow the Cross; and that this extraordinary adventure was permitted for the purpose of reminding him of the resolution, which he had formed of leaving the world, and of embracing the ecclesiastical state. He now for the first time communicated his design to his preceptor, begged him to open it to the Count of Sales, and to omit no means in his power to obtain his consent.

The very exemplary piety, which had hitherto shone in the conduct of Francis, might have prepared the preceptor, to hear such a proposal without surprise; he was however as much embarrassed with it, as if he had never had any reason to expect such an occurrence. As he was a man distinguished by piety and learning, he was afraid on one side of opposing the will of God, by diverting the young Count from the execution of his design; on the other hand, his attachment to

the house of Sales was strong, and he could not be induced to approve a resolution, which defeated all the views of that illustrious family in the education of the young Count. His embarrassment made him observe at first a profound silence; he ventured at length to speak, and represent the deep affliction, into which such a plan would plunge the Count and Countess of Sales, together with the whole family, who looked up to him as their future support; that with this view he had attained every accomplishment, which his studies and travels could supply; that no expence had been spared to qualify him to support the dignity of his illustrious house; that they had every reason to depend upon him, as he was the eldest son, and was possessed of every quality necessary to realize the great hopes, which had been conceived of his future eminence. In addition to these motives of interest, the preceptor proceeded to observe, with much energy, that the designation of children to any particular state, by the will of parents, must ever be considered as a vocation from heaven; when such a state is not incompatible with a due regard to religion and the salvation of their souls; that God, who is not less the author of nature than of grace, never indicates his adorable will with more certainty and effect, than by the natural order of things, when it is properly attended to; that in every period of the world, the eldest sons have

been destined to support and perpetuate families, of which they are justly considered the leading members; that if it is not lawful for children to dispose of any part of the property, appropriated to their use, in opposition to the will of their parents, much less can it be endured, that they should dispose of their persons, in defiance of their wishes, and in a manner incompatible with the general good of their families; that nothing is more essentially the real property of parents, than the children, whom they have brought into life; that their right in this instance is clearly inalienable; and that no one should adopt the fatal opinion, that a vain imagination, perhaps a capricious sally, which may be followed by repentance, can ever justify him, in withdrawing himself from that subjection, which originates in nature, or the order established by God. With the same force, he continued to remark, that persons with the best intentions, are often deceived in their choice of a state of life; that a man might imagine he was obeying the dictates of heaven, when in reality he was gratifying his own inclinations; that self-love is always to be distrusted; that it assumes every form, and insinuates itself imperceptibly into the best purposes, where it is little expected to reside; that many persons who believe they are renouncing the world, become in fact more devoted to themselves; that after every consideration which could

be given to the business, he did not believe, that in order to belong to God, and obtain eternal happiness, it was necessary, in opposition to the wishes of parents, by whom he was tenderly beloved, to embrace the ecclesiastical state; that all Christians, as such, without adding to the obligations of the state, in which Divine Providence had placed them, are called to the practice of superior sanctity; that the Gospel is the most perfect of all codes, and that it is sufficient to follow its rules implicitly, to become a great saint; that it is a gross mistake to imagine, that salvation is unattainable in the world; that Heaven is peopled with saints, who had lived in public life; that as for him, he had less reason to relinquish the comforts of society, as God had made him the heir of a family, distinguished by its piety, in which he had always observed, and would continue to witness the brightest examples of virtue; and that so far from being exposed to occasions of ruin, he would find very serious obstacles in his way, if ever he should be unfortunately disposed, to indulge in irregularity and vice. To reasons, which may be thought sufficiently numerous and powerful, the preceptor still added, that it would be a singular occurrence, if all virtuous persons were to adopt the fancy of leaving the world; that mankind stood in need of striking examples, of persons

possessed of sufficient fortitude to resist the torrent of corruption and of custom ; that so far from approving his resolution, from a desire of belonging entirely to God, that circumstance induced him to combat it, because, by remaining in the world, with the noble sentiments, which the Almighty had given him, he would both sanctify himself, and prove instrumental in the sanctification of others : that St. Lewis, St. Henry, St. Edward, the blessed Amadeus, Duke of Savoy, and thousands of others, who were born to Sovereignty, had found in the world such obstacles to their salvation, as possibly would not occur elsewhere, and still had become very eminent saints ; that assuredly he might securely walk in the steps of such distinguished guides ; and that he advised him with all the ardor of friendship to follow their example, and to show a more delicate regard for a father and mother, by whom he was tenderly beloved, than to adopt a resolution which was sufficient to embitter and shorten their days.

The young Count, who had imagined that his preceptor, a priest, a doctor of divinity, and a man of eminent piety, could never disapprove the choice of that state, in which himself was engaged, was not a little surprised to hear him so forcibly combat the resolution which he had taken, of leaving the

world to live only for God, and to ensure his salvation. He looked at him with that enchanting meekness, which was always found irresistible, and not doubting that if he could convince him of the propriety of his choice, such a person might be rendered instrumental in gaining the approbation of the Count and Countess of Sales, who shewed him peculiar confidence, he began to reproach him in the most gentle and friendly manner. "What!" exclaimed he, "Can you blame a resolution, which you have yourself adopted? You separated yourself from the world; and do you think of forcing me into that turbulent scene, when I have formed a plan of retreating? You did not imagine that you could save your soul in the world, and still you would wish me to try the experiment, who have so much less virtue than yourself. Where is the Evangelical precept, which obliges you to love your neighbour as yourself? Where is the tenderness of a father, and the sincerity of a friend?"

His preceptor, who bore him the most cordial affection, felt the force of his reproaches, and wished to interrupt him; but the young Count had now entered with warmth into the subject, and would afford him no opportunity of renewing his remonstrances. He replied very distinctly to

every topic, which had been used to oppose his design, and closed his address in the following manner: " Believe me, I know myself but too well; it is true I am young; but I clearly see, that the advantages of nature, and of fortune, to which you have alluded, serve to increase the dangers, to which we are all but too much exposed, with respect to the important business of salvation. Those with which I am surrounded, are without number; many are open to my view; others lie more concealed. I know full well that I possess real virtue, but in desire; and that I carry within me the sources of seduction and disorder, which need not be increased by the blandishments of the world, in which you wish to engage me for life. And of what avail will all my endeavours be, if I gain the whole world, and lose my soul? There is one clear and undeniable fact to be opposed to the whole of your reasoning, which is, that God has long given me a rooted aversion for the enjoyments of the world; He has favoured me with the grace of preferring His fear and His love to every other consideration. Do not oppose the execution of a design which He has inspired. Rather advance a step farther; assist me in carrying it into effect; and as I foresee that the greatest obstacles will arise from those to whom I am indebted for my existence, and to whom, after

God, I owe the greatest respect, labour to gain them, and spare me the pain of taking any step, which might be followed by their displeasure."

The preceptor was extremely affected with the young Count's address. He admired in a person of his age, that profound contempt for the alluring and seductive charms of the world, that firmness in resisting the tender feelings of nature; and convinced that his pupil was called to the highest perfection, he replied, that God was his witness, that his salvation was as dear to him as his own, and that he absolutely made no distinction between the interests of his soul and those of his own; but that different advice must be applied to different cases; that as for himself, he had left the world, because he thought he could not secure his salvation amidst its dangers, nor did he feel sufficient strength to resist its corruption; but with respect to his pupil, the practice of the most rigorous virtue, which he had constantly observed in him, had convinced him, that he might remain in the world, not only without losing his soul, but with considerable advantage to the salvation of others, whom his example would engage in a laudable course of virtue. He was free to own, that the secret attachment, which he felt to the sentiments of the Count and Countess of Sales, so opposite

to those of their son, had induced him to combat the choice which he was about to make ; that the honour done him by them, in confiding his person, the dearest object of their affections, to his care and tuition, demanded on his part, every effort to second their views for his establishment ; that it was, besides, incontestably true, that some young persons suffer themselves to be dazzled by false lights, by which they are engaged in the practice of a weak and ill regulated devotion, and that they mistake for a vocation from Heaven, a certain tenderness arising from indiscreet piety, a taste for spiritual things which has no solidity, and which but too frequently brings, with it repentance and despair, that terminate in excesses, of which they would never have been guilty, if they had remained in the world ; that the knowledge, which he had of the excellence of his understanding, of the steadiness of his heart, and in particular, of the care with which he preserved his baptismal innocence, and of the peculiar graces with which he had been favoured in many dangerous and critical conjunctures, inspired fairer hopes with respect to his vocation ; that he was determined to withdraw his opposition ; but that he begged to decline the task of making the proposal to his parents ; that he did not feel himself possessed of the strength of mind, which could enable him to give them so

severe a blow ; that he judged of their feelings by his own, and that he calculated the impression, which such a proposal would make on them, by what he had himself experienced.

* This conversation lasted till they reached the Castle of Tuille, where the Count and Countess were waiting the arrival of their son. The young Count there found, that arrangements had been made, which were very opposite to his own plans. The Count of Sales, who had nothing in view, but an advantageous match for his son, had during his absence fixed his mind for the purpose, on a young lady of the name of Vegy, an only daughter of the Baron of Vegy, a counsellor of state to the Duke of Savoy, and chief justice of the province of Chablais. She was of high rank, beautiful, rich, and possessed of every personal accomplishment: and there was not a nobleman in Savoy, who would not have considered himself honoured by such a connection. The Count of Sales had planned this match for his son with the utmost address ; he considered the execution of this scheme, as a master-piece of policy, and he only waited for the return of the young Count, to

* Charles Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

bring to a conclusion an affair which was to ensure to the house of Sales, wealth, honour and credit. His son was no sooner arrived, than he made the proposal, and told him to be in readiness for the morrow, to go with him to ask for his destined bride.

This was a stroke of thunder to the young Count. Often was he on the point of declining the proposal, and of discovering to his father, the secret design which he had conceived, of engaging in the church; but as often was he prevented by the force of filial respect. It appeared to him to be a strong indication of rudeness, and even of contempt towards a young lady of rank, to commence a courtship with a premeditated design never to contract marriage; whatever reflections naturally strike an ingenuous mind under such circumstances, occurred to him on this distressing occasion; but the extreme mildness of his temper, and an unconquerable repugnance to thwart the inclinations of his father in this delicate conjuncture, deprived him of the power of explaining his sentiments. The Count of Sales, on his side, could not but perceive the cold reserve, with which his son received a proposition, calculated to fill him with joy. But as he was far from suspecting the real cause of such an appearance, he ascribed it to

his modesty ; and had no manner of doubt, that the charms of his intended consort, would overcome that indifference which he believed had no real cause. On the day of their departure, the young Count had not the courage to make his father acquainted with his real sentiments. They were courteously received at the Castle of Sallander, whither the Baron of Vegy had proceeded to conclude the marriage. That nobleman was highly delighted with his intended son-in-law ; the feelings of his daughter were still stronger. Never did two persons appear more completely formed for each other. But heaven had otherwise disposed of this virtuous and accomplished nobleman. The young Count could not conceal his restraint ; and his manner exhibited such marks of embarrassment, as did not escape the observation of his father ; he made him the most bitter reproaches ; these were answered only by a bashful silence. This conduct, so little expected by the Count of Sales, obliged him to depart without proceeding farther in the business. On their return he again spoke to his son in more bitter terms of reproach ; the young Count modestly replied, that nothing could possibly excite in him more concern, than the uneasiness which he had given to his father. The Countess of Sales, who bore her son the most cordial affection, employed all her influence

to engage him in the match, but without effect; all the friends of the family were equally unsuccessful in their endeavours; and the Count of Sales,* after so many fruitless attempts, was left to ruminate in silent perplexity, on every possible cause, which could induce his son to decline so advantageous a proposal.

† The affair assumed a still more unpleasant aspect, when the Baron of Hermance brought from Turin letters patent issued by the Duke of Savoy, who, informed of the intended marriage of the young Count, gratuitously bestowed on him the rank of senator, in the senate of Chamberry. Francis declined the honour with a constancy, which no solicitations could shake. The Count of Sales discovered on this occasion a degree of displeasure, which the tender feelings of his son could no longer support. The young Count, therefore, came to a determination, to lay open his real intentions; and for this purpose he applied to his cousin Lewis of Sales, a canon of the cathedral of Geneva, whose influence over the mind of his father he knew to be great.

‡ Lewis of Sales, who was a person of singular piety, was so far from combating his design, that

* Ibid. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

he gave it his full approbation, and promised every assistance in his power in carrying it into execution. He desired only to have a little time, to recommend it to God, and to look out for a favourable conjuncture, to execute an affair which demanded the utmost address. * In taking this precaution, he had particular views of his own. Francis Empereur, provost of the church of Geneva, and senator of Chamberry, was just dead; by his demise the first dignity in that church became vacant. The right of presentation resided in the Pope. Lewis of Sales had many friends at the court of Rome, whose interest he employed to solicit the vacant benefice for the young Count; and as his request was well attended to, he succeeded in his application. The most singular part of the transaction was, that he concealed it entirely from Francis, not doubting that he would consent with more facility to accept of a dignity, which on his part was unsolicited.

Lewis of Sales was not deceived in calculating the success of his application at Rome; for the bulls shortly arrived, and he imparted the history of the transaction to the young Count. But he was greatly surprised to hear his declaration, that in

* Ibid.

embracing the ecclesiastical state, he had not any view to obtain preferment; that it was his intention to live on his patrimony; that he considered himself unworthy of the rank, which had been secured for him; that it would be extremely improper so suddenly to place a young man, like himself, without virtue and without experience, who had not been tried in the lower stations, at the head of the clergy of a great diocese, in rank next to the bishop; that this situation was more suitable to his cousin; that he begged he might be allowed to surrender to him his right; and that as to himself, he should be satisfied with the last place in the House of the Lord

But Lewis of Sales, who had great influence over him, replied, with a tone of decision, that he admired the humility, which led him to decline the rank, conferred on him by his Holiness; that he agreed with him, that it was improper to solicit preferment; that persons should wait, till they are called by God to the dignities of the church; but that it would be very censurable obstinacy to decline them, when they come unsolicited; that he knew him better than he knew himself; that God had provided this favourable conjuncture to furnish him with a more easy and expeditious way of

obtaining the consent of his parents; that he begged to be trusted with the management of the affair; that he would be responsible for the event in the sight of God and man; and that he doubted not, that Divine Providence had some design in raising him so suddenly, and without his own participation, to a dignity which placed him so near to a bishopric.

It was by no means a part of the young Count's character, to adhere pertinaciously to his own opinion: he yielded to truth, whenever he discovered it, and often to authority, when there was nothing to excite his distrust, and it was found sufficient to guide his determination.* The reason which had been alleged, that he had not solicited the provostship of the church of Geneva, and his esteem for Lewis of Sales, at length induced him to accept the situation. No sooner had he given his consent, than his charitable kinsman, went to the Count and Countess of Sales, and requested a private interview. He shewed them the bulls for the provostship of the church of Geneva, which he had obtained for his cousin. He informed them, that some time past Francis had communicated to

* Charles Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

him in confidence, a design which he had formed of renouncing the world, and of engaging in the church; that it was not the resolution of a day, but that he had taken it from his earliest youth; that it was in pursuance of this plan, when he should be old enough to execute it, that he had solicited their permission to receive the tonsure; that fully aware of the respect which he owed to his parents, he had requested them to obtain their consent: that he hoped their piety would not suffer them to raise any obstacle to the execution of a plan, which God inspired, as in this scheme their son sought only his own salvation; that he left them only because he preferred heaven to earth, and the service of God to that of the world; that it was the greatest return, which could be made them in this life, for their uncommon care in inspiring him with the earliest impressions of piety; that besides, he felt himself obliged to inform them, that their son was so completely confirmed in this resolution, as to be absolutely unshaken; that their efforts to oppose it would be without effect; that they might themselves form an accurate judgment from what had happened, as it was only with a view to execute this purpose, that he had declined the advantageous match, which they had planned, and the rank of senator, which the Duke of Savoy had so liberally bestowed.

* Never was such surprise excited in the human breast, as the Count and Countess of Sales experienced on this distressing occasion. They looked at each other without the power of utterance. Amidst their total inability to make any reply, Lewis of Sales represented to them, that he had himself examined the vocation of the young Count, and that he had caused the closest investigation to be made by persons, distinguished by their virtues and talents; that they had all unanimously agreed, that his vocation came from God; that, on such a ground, all opposition would be vain; that he was free to acknowledge, that the stroke was severe; that it defeated their views, that it ruined their hopes, that it was impossible that nature should not murmur at the event, but that faith and religion should silence such complaints, and enforce submission to the ordinances of God, which could not be disobeyed without the commission of a crime; that independently of every other consideration, children belonged more to Him, than to their parents; that they might be considered as a deposite, lodged in their hands, which He could resume, whenever it pleased Him; that they should account themselves happy, in enjoying an opportunity of making Him such a surrender; and that

* Ibid.

their compliance was calculated to entail on their family greater blessings than all the plans which could be projected.

The Count and Countess of Sales answered these forcible remonstrances, only by sighs and tears. Lewis of Sales, who knew their sincere piety, now assumed a more elevated tone: "What?" exclaimed he, "Do you venture to commence a contest with the Almighty? Do you seek to obtain the advantage in such a struggle? Where is your faith? Where is your religion? What is become of that unlimited submission, which you owe Him? What would be your conduct, if he were to order you, like Abraham, to sacrifice this dear son, with your own hands? Or, as he permitted in the case of Job, if death were to rob you in one day, of all your children? Of the numerous family with which He has blessed you, He asks only for a son, and will you refuse compliance with such a request, after He has consigned His only begotten Son to death for your salvation."

Such an impressive address engaged the Count of Sales to give utterance to his feelings. "I know," replied he, "that whatever I possess, belongs more to God than to myself; he is abso-

lute master of all his creatures; who can dare to enter into a contest with him? But though my son were to comply with my wishes, would he less belong to God?" His sighs interrupted his discourse, and prevented him from proceeding; but after recovering himself in some measure, he said with a calm tone, * that the Countess and himself must require some days to come to a determination; he begged his kinsman not to leave them, and declared that he would soon give his final answer. Lewis of Sales asked him, if the young Count himself might be permitted to solicit his consent. "No," replied he, "his appearance would disarm me; I will let you know in proper time"

If the Count of Sales felt an extreme aversion to acquiesce in the desire of his son, the reluctance of the Countess was not less strong. She retired to her cabinet overwhelmed with grief, where she spent several days in solitary affliction. Piety at length gained an ascendancy over nature; and after testifying the most complete submission to the will of God, she had the strength of mind, to persuade her husband to a compliance with the wishes of her son.

* Anon. Life of St. Francis of Sales. Book I.

The happy day, on which the parents were expected to give their consent, at length arrived, and Lewis of Sales brought with him the young Count. The sight of a son who was so dear to them, renewed their grief; they again vented the most melancholy sighs, and their tears began again to flow; even Lewis of Sales, with all his firmness, was so far softened, as to discover marks of sensibility. Scarce had the Count and Countess of Sales strength enough to raise their son, who had thrown himself at their feet, and resolutely remained in that posture. At length the Count, who was naturally possessed of a great share of magnanimity, made a serious effort to suppress his feelings, and represented to his son, how necessary it was to be cautious, lest in appearing to follow a call from Heaven, he might act in opposition to the Divine will, and to the order established by Providence.* He observed, that the eldest sons were destined, in the order of nature, to support and perpetuate their families; that with this view, he had given him an education, which would become perfectly useless in the station of life, which he was choosing; that his brothers had not enjoyed the same advantages; that his family needed peculiar protection, as it was numerous; that as to

* Anon. *ibid.*

himself, he had looked up to him as the comfort and support of his declining years; and that it was not without extreme pain, that he was about to see himself deprived of the advantage which he expected; that he did not see, that he would less belong to God, by remaining in a Christian family, like his own, in which each one placed his glory in the fear and service of his Maker; that notwithstanding his mother and he had come to a determination, not to oppose his choice; but he cautioned him to examine, if God really demanded of him, the execution of a project, which appeared so contrary to the obligations of nature, and to the dictates of humanity.

The young Count replied with sentiments of great respect, that he should not consider himself exempted, by the state which he was going to embrace, from complying with any of the duties; which nature imperiously demanded of him towards his family; that he was fully determined not to shew less submission to his father than before, nor to be deficient in exhibiting a proper spirit of dependance; that he should be ready on all occasions, agreeably to the judgment of his parents, to contribute his attention and concern to the advantage and prosperity of the family; that he was well aware, that nothing could authorise him

to dissolve the sacred ties, which unite children with their parents; that God was his witness, that nothing could exceed the love and gratitude, which he felt for those, whom Divine Providence had made the authors of his existence; and that the education which they had bestowed upon him, would perhaps be not altogether so useless, as they might be induced to imagine.

These last words engaged the Count of Sales, to interrupt him in his observations, and to press him to accept the dignity of senator, which the Duke of Savoy had offered; he made the request with uncommon earnestness, as the situation in question was not incompatible with the state of life, which he was about to embrace, and his predecessor had shewn him the example. But the young Count, throwing himself at his feet, entreated, that he would accede to his request without any reserve, and allow him to employ the remainder of his days in the duties of the ministry, to which he was called. He added, that he had desired his cousin, to give him an account of his vocation, and that he did not doubt, that he had done it better than he could himself; that he was waiting for the blessing of his father and mother, and that he would not leave them, till he had obtained it.

Whatever might have been the feelings of the Count, on seeing his son decline an honour, so consonant to the views of his family, he could not but yield to the wishes of one so dear to him; he gave him his blessing, in which act the Countess also joined; and after raising him up, and embracing him with tenderness, he said: * "I pray God, my son, to be your reward in heaven, as he is going to be your portion on earth." The young Count entreated, that for the better accomplishment of his purpose, he might be allowed to surrender his rights as eldest son, in favour of his brother Lewis of Sales, whom he tenderly loved on account of his singular virtue; but the parents positively refused to consent to such a proposal, and insisted that his birthright should remain untouched,

The young Count, in transports of joy, proceeded immediately, accompanied with Lewis of Sales, to take possession of the provostship of Geneva. On the road, Lewis of Sales perceived his kinsman to be in tears; he asked him if he repented of the step he was taking. Francis replied, that he was far removed from such a disposition of mind; that he never was more inclined

* Charles Aug. of Sales, *ibid*.

to indulge in joy; but still that he could not reflect without emotion on the bitter grief, which he unavoidably occasioned to parents, who had always treated him with the most tender affection; that he believed the sacrifice, which he was making to God, would not be less agreeable, by being accompanied with tears, which the feelings of nature called forth. Lewis of Sales, far from blaming him, acknowledged, that he himself had been so affected with the distressing situation of the Count and Countess of Sales, that more than once he had been tempted to give up the point, and side with them against their son, but that the firmness of his cousin had restrained him from proceeding to that purpose.

On their arrival at Annecy, Lewis of Sales, assembled the chapter of the cathedral. Francis there presented his bulls, dated the Seventh day of March, in the Eighth year of the Pontificate of Clement VIII., together with the attestations of his noble birth, and of his studies and qualifications. The chapter examined them, and received him with a degree of honour, proportioned to the reputation, which his virtue and knowledge had deservedly attained. The chapter in a body gave him possession; and he made them a discourse, so full of sweetness and piety, that he

completely gained all hearts. The news of this event soon spread through the town ; and as the house of Sales was held in the highest estimation, and Francis in particular was in great esteem, it was hailed with very general joy. But no person appeared to feel a more lively interest in this affair, than the pious bishop of Geneva ; he received Francis as a man, whom God made known to him for his future successor, and who was to edify the whole Church by his superior sanctity. Shortly after he gave him the four minor orders, with the order of sub-deacon ; and during the ensuing ember days, he ordained him deacon. The humble Francis was desirous of observing the usual interstices, agreeably to the regulations of the Church, but the holy bishop, who was perfectly acquainted with the purity of his heart, and his eminent piety and learning, and who had an eager desire of hearing him preach, peremptorily required that he should accept of a dispensation from the rule. The respect, which Francis had for his diocesan, prevented him from contesting the point. He was employed in preaching while he was yet in deacon's orders ; and he performed this function with so much success, that it clearly appeared that God had chosen him to convince the understandings, and gain the hearts of the Calvinists, with whom the diocese of Geneva greatly

abounded.* Three Calvinists of great distinction, and eminent for their knowledge, the Baron of Awlly, the Baron of Bursin, and another, whose name history has not preserved, assisted at his first sermon, and acknowledged, that it made on them a deep impression, and that they conceived a better opinion of the catholic faith, than they had before entertained. In fact, they abstained from the ridicule and raillery, in which they had been accustomed to indulge with great freedom. The course of this history will exhibit the fruits, which this first seed produced, and the blessing of Heaven which attended the work.

This sermon was followed by others, which considerably extended his reputation ; and in truth he possessed very great endowments, both natural and acquired, which eminently qualified him for the undertaking. His appearance was at once dignified and modest, his voice strong and agreeable, his action lively and animated, without any mixture of affectation. He by no means neglected the study of eloquence ; and he frequently observed, that if that distinguished art was employed

* Charles Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

in establishing error, there existed every inducement to make it subservient to the triumph of truth, and to the noble purpose of persuasion.

These external qualities, which merit the attention of the Christian orator, were supported by a degree of unction, which proved, that what he delivered, proceeded from the fulness and abundance of his heart, and that he had truly made himself a disciple of Jesus Christ, in order to attain this ascendancy over the minds of men.* Before his sermons, it was his usual custom to renew the ardor of his piety, by secret sighs and fervent prayers. The words of our Redeemer, concerning his precursor St. John, were perpetually present to his mind: "He was as a burning and shining lamp," and they had convinced him, that in order to shed useful light, and illuminate the minds of men with any effect, it is necessary to glow with the love of God, and a zeal for the salvation of souls. He studied at the feet of the crucifix, at least as much as in books; and he was perfectly convinced, that a preacher can in no instance produce any fruit, unless he be a man of prayer, and careful to exemplify in his

* Anon.

own conduct, the lessons which he imparts to others.

But however his occupations might have been directed to piety, on the approach of the period at which he was to receive the order of priesthood, he relinquished every pursuit, to attend to God alone. Before that time he had employed many hours of the day, in the study of scholastic theology and controversy; but he now altered his plan, and bestowed his undivided attention on that Divine theology, which consists in prayer and meditation of the holy scriptures, of which science the Holy Ghost is the only master. Experience had taught him, that the more the understanding is engaged in considering the greatness of God with scholastic subtlety, the will is often more remote from his love; that true wisdom is acquired by the fear of God, by a good life, by the practice of Christian virtues, and by continual meditation on the law of God; that many wish for an enlightened mind, who entertain the most profound indifference for virtue and justice. As he desired with greater ardor to be a saint than to be a learned man, he regulated his conduct by the maxim of St. Augustin,* who observes, that those

* Epist. 112.

who have learnt of Jesus Christ to be meek and humble of heart, make a more rapid progress in the knowledge of God, by meditation and prayer, than by reading and study.

With this view, he laboured to attain that species of learning, by which the holy fathers have been so eminently distinguished; and fully aware, that God is purity itself, and cannot be seen but by pure eyes, he was careful incessantly to purify his soul by the exercise of Christian virtues, that it might be prepared to receive those lights of God, and that interior unction, which is the source of all knowledge. Thus disposed for the sublime dignity of the priesthood, it is by no means surprising, that he should receive a profusion of heavenly graces, and the plenitude of that spirit which forms the character of the priest, and gives force to the pastor; and that as often as he celebrated the awful mysteries of the altar; he should discover in his eyes and in his countenance, a fire, which indicated the interior ardor, with which his heart was inflamed.

After this period, he was observed to shun with peculiar caution, whatever might attract the applause of men. Content to please God alone, and eager solely to procure his glory, he rarely

preached in cities, but was constantly engaged in visiting villages, and hamlets, for the purpose of instructing a great number of poor objects, who lived in the bosom of Christianity, in a total ignorance of its precepts. After the example of our Redeemer, he took delight in conversing with these simple and innocent persons, whom he generally found better disposed to receive the light of the gospel, as their hearts were untainted by ambition, by the love of wealth, or any of those passions, which are the unfortunate source of the blindness and corruption that prevail among mankind.

He might agreeably to the direction of St. Paul, have received what was necessary for his support, from those to whom he imparted spiritual treasures with so much profusion; but he chose rather to follow the example of that apostle, than to avail himself of the liberty which he allows. Far from being a burthen to his people, he distributed among them his alms with liberality; this he was enabled to perform either from his own effects, or from the charitable contributions, which had been entrusted to his care. The truth is, disinterestedness is one of those qualities, which strongly contribute to raise and dignify the ministry of the pastor; as on the other hand, avarice

and a lust of sordid gain, never fail to degrade it in the minds of the people. If they once perceive an attempt to acquire wealth at their expence; if even dues be exacted with excessive rigour; and a species of domination, so expressly forbidden in the scriptures, should appear in the character of their pastor, it is not possible for them any longer to preserve that esteem and confidence, which are so necessary to gain the heart, and to engage the flock, in opposition to natural repugnance, in a course of Christian virtue. Contempt inevitably succeeds the loss of esteem; hatred soon follows, in the natural order of things, and the infallible consequence will be, that the laity will attend more to the example than to the discourses of the pastor.

Disinterestedness was not the only quality, which ensured to Francis the esteem and confidence of the people. He possessed a degree of meekness, which nothing was able to discompose; he considered his flock as his children, and lived among them as a father; with a heart open to their wants, and full of compassion for their miseries, he made himself all to all, in order to gain all to Jesus Christ. Thus in a short time the neighbourhood of Annecy assumed a new appearance; piety was observed to flourish in those places, in which a

mixture of heresy had terminated almost in irreligion.

But Francis of Sales did not so completely devote his attention to the people in the country, as to neglect the town of Annecy; he there visited the hospitals and prisons; he terminated law-suits, in which his knowledge of the canon and civil laws was of singular advantage; he spared no pains to compose differences, and to reconcile the most implacable enemies. God favoured his endeavours in this particular with a peculiar blessing; few were found so hardened, as to resist the impression of his meekness, and of his charitable and insinuating manner.

* This year (1593) he established at Annecy, a pious association of singular utility, which he called the Confraternity of the Cross. The obligations of the members consisted in imparting instruction to the ignorant, in visiting and consoling the sick, in teaching them the Christian use which they might make of their sufferings, in supplying them with means of attaining true fortitude, and in burying them after their decease. They were likewise required to visit, console, and assist pri-

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book I. Anon. *ibid.*

soners: to repair to the country and instruct the poor; they received a particular caution to avoid law-suits, so generally fatal to Christian charity. In the event of any difference arising, they were obliged to terminate it, as far as circumstances permitted, by the arbitration of the members, who were required to bestow the utmost attention on the affair in dispute. It was particularly recommended to them to give good example, by assisting at the Divine service, and instructions in their different parishes. Francis of Sales was invariably of opinion, that private devotion, should never divert the faithful from frequenting the churches, in which they receive by baptism a new life in Christ, nor withdraw them from the instructions of their lawful pastors.

He drew up for the use of this association, rules and instructions, replete with prudence and piety, but particularly adapted to the state of laymen, of which the great proportion of the members consisted. He was himself the first prior of the fraternity; but he showed his superiority more by the example which he gave, than by the rank which he held; for no person was ever less disposed to aim at pre-eminence than himself; no one ever avoided with more studied care, whatever could flatter that natural desire inherent in

the human breast, of attaining superior rank. The good works of this new association, soon acquired such extensive credit in the provinces, that the people of Aix and Chamberry, formed similar confraternities in their cities, on the model of that of Annecy, and requested to have the rules and constitutions which he had composed.

The formation of this Confraternity of the Cross, gave occasion to a neighbouring minister to write against the honour, which catholics pay to this sign of our salvation; the sight of which is sufficient to excite in the mind, the remembrance of that charity, which has induced a God to shed His blood for the redemption of mankind.

Francis, in consequence of this production, resumed the study of controversy, which he had for some time interrupted. He shortly after replied to the minister, by a work, entitled "The Standard of the Cross;" which is divided into four books, and is still extant among his writings. He there shews, that the veneration, which catholics pay to the cross, is by no means new; that the Christians of the first ages shewed the same honour to the cross; and of this assertion, he produces proofs, that adoration in a qualified

sense, even agreeably to the scripture may be paid to creatures; but that one species of adoration is due to God alone; such is that mentioned in the decalogue; that Catholics never pay this kind of adoration but to God himself, and that by consequence they cannot be idolaters, as they are unjustly called by the Calvinists; finally, he shews, that the worship which Catholics pay to the cross, and to holy things, is not supreme, but relative, and that it centres entirely in God. No answer was given to this performance; and the Catholics considered this silence, as a proof of the superior excellence of the work, which Francis had published.

Having no more adversaries to contend with, he resumed his former exercises. Nothing could be more orderly, more simple and more uniform, than his manner of life; he carefully avoided all affected singularity, which but too often is calculated to attract the esteem of men; he shunned that exquisite art of adjusting the external appearance, which, without regulating the affections of the heart, serves but to excite a false impression of superior sanctity. He was neat, but modest in his furniture, table, and dress; his conversation was engaging, agreeable and easy, without affectation, and without constraint, he was a kind,

and even a warm friend, sincere and free from artifice, but prudent, and possessed of the gift of secrecy. His eyes and his countenance betrayed an air of peace and serenity, which indicated the purity of his heart; he was civil, and even naturally well-bred; possessed of a complete knowledge of propriety and decorum, and attentive to its observance, without too nice and scrupulous attachment to external forms.

He frequently observed, that true piety is by no means incompatible with the social virtues, nor with those attentions, which give a charm to civil society; that, in order to be devout, it is not necessary to neglect cleanliness, to affect a roughness of manner, to exhibit a gothic rudeness, and to be divested of gentleness and politeness of deportment; that on the contrary, it becomes a duty, to gain all hearts, by an amiable and interesting manner, which may contribute to render virtue amiable; that sullen sadness and scrupulous fear cannot be said to form the character of true piety; that the grand object of Christians should be to serve God with joy, and with a holy liberty; and that nothing is so opposite to the spirit of Christianity, as restless uneasiness and servile constraint. For this reason, would he remark, does God oblige us to call Him by the

endearing name of Father; we are therefore to shew Him a tender and filial regard, and we cannot depend too much on His goodness, as long as we do not force Him by our sins to have recourse to His justice. When the Almighty, he would add, is obliged to punish us, we may be assured, that He proceeds to such a measure with reluctance, as His nature is goodness, and severity is only shewn, when we force Him to it by our crimes.

But this external appearance of Francis of Sales, which exhibited nothing uncommon, was supported by interior qualities, by an innocence of manners, which he had never violated, by a heart pure, disinterested, submissive to the orders of God, always engaged with His Divine presence, full of ardent zeal for His glory, and singularly impressed with an attention to please Him, and a desire to possess Him.

Those who are intimately acquainted with the character of St. Francis of Sales, will be satisfied with the picture, which has been drawn; his life will be found a continued illustration of what is here advanced.

In the mean time the reputation of Francis was diffused on all sides; and though he considered the public esteem valuable, only as far as he was enabled to acquire more confidence, and a greater ascendancy, which tended to promote the glory of God, yet public honour pursued him in spite of his endeavours to avoid it. The general estimation in which he was held, attracted a fresh mark of the esteem of his Sovereign; and solicitations were renewed, to induce him to accept of the rank of senator, which had been before offered.

It was observed to him in the name of the Duke of Savoy, that this dignity would furnish him with the means of serving God with more advantage than in a private station; much was said of the injustice which he might prevent, possessed as he was of an enlightened mind, and an upright and uncorrupted heart; the concerns of the poor, who after God were known to be the fond objects of his affection, and whose interests he might support, were not forgotten in the enumeration; it was farther remarked, that this employment would not interrupt his exercises of piety; that on the contrary, with the ascendancy, which his birth, his virtue, and his knowledge, must inevitably acquire, he would be enabled to protect innocence, and restrain vice. Thus was this affair

placed in the most advantageous light, in which it could be viewed.

But the humble Francis persisted in his refusal. He made his acknowledgments to his Sovereign, in a manner which increased the esteem that prince had entertained for him; and he replied to those who had spoken in his name, that as God had called him to the service of His Church, it was his duty to make no engagements, which possibly might divert him from such a work; that those who believed the sacred ministry insufficient to engross the undivided attention of any man, could not be aware of the extent of duty, which charity supplies to zeal; that in truth he was free to own, that God had given him a sufficient share of uprightness and firmness, not to be induced to commit deliberate injustice; but who would be answerable, that he should be enabled to guard against those instances of surprise, to which such employments are so much exposed? that to undertake to decide on the property and lives of men, was a business of extreme danger; that Christ himself refused to be judge in a contest between two brothers, concerning their inheritance; that he was determined to follow His example; that at all events, he thought this conduct the safest, and most conformable to the peaceable and undis-

turbed life, which he had embraced, and in which he hoped, God would give him the grace to persevere to death.

The Count and Countess of Sales had flattered themselves, that their son would not resist this second attempt; and as their views were not altogether so pure as his, they had indulged a hope, that when the first fervour of devotion had subsided, he would become more flexible, and feel less repugnance to unite two objects, which to them did not appear incompatible. The general usage of most states of Christendom, in which clergymen fill offices of magistracy without scruple, the example of so many great men, who have shone in those stations with great credit to themselves, and without any detriment to their salvation, and the dutiful regard, which he always shewed to the sentiments of his parents, had induced them to think, that he would finally yield to reiterated solicitations, supported by the authority and the entreaties of his Sovereign. But the designs of God on his elect are various; if he calls some to situations of public trust, he fills others with a holy aversion for those distracting employments so opposite to the peace of the soul, and to interior solitude, which have always formed the delight of the saints.

God had particular views, respecting his holy servant, which were not compatible with the proposed employment. These designs required a person totally devoted to his service, and uncumbered with any other engagement, than that of procuring his glory, and of bestowing all his care on the salvation of souls. This will evidently appear in the course of the following history.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

THE LIFE

OF

Saint Francis of Sales.

BOOK II.

C O N T E N T S

OF THE

SECOND BOOK.

THE Duke of Savoy recovers three bailiwicks, of which the inhabitants of Geneva and the Swiss had taken forcible possession....He forms a plan of re-establishing in those parts the Catholic religion, which had been suppressed during the usurpation....He writes on the subject to the Bishop of Geneva....St. Francis of Sales is chosen to accomplish this great design....The Count and Countess of Sales, omit no means to dissuade him from the undertaking....He proceeds to Chablais, accompanied by his cousin Lewis of Sales....Apostolic manner, in which he undertakes this celebrated mission....Prudent advice given him by the Baron of Hermance, the governor of the province for the Duke of Savoy....St. Francis of Sales arrives at Thonon....His life is there exposed to danger....He escapes it by his meekness, his prudence and constancy....His labours are for a great length of time unattended with success....His patience and confidence in God....The Baron of Hermance, apprised of the conspiracies, which had been formed against his life, wishes to assign him a guard....He declines it....

Imminent dangers, to which he is exposed....His piety and patience, amidst the difficulties, which surround him in every quarter....He converts the garrison of the fortress of Allinges....By his moderation and distinguished example of virtue, he gains the affection of the people of Thonon....He undertakes, with much zeal, a series of conferences, and of controversial discussions....He justifies the doctrine of the Catholic Church....He proposes an amicable conference with the ministers of the Calvinists on the contested points; but they, instead of accepting the offer, hire assassins to destroy him....He avoids this danger by his firmness and his meekness....He fixes his abode at Thonon....His apostolic labours....He converts a considerable number of Calvinists....Fresh conspiracies against his life; he escapes by a particular protection of Providence....The continual dangers to which he is exposed, induce the Count and Countess of Sales, and all his friends, to write to him the most pressing exhortations to relinquish the mission of Chablais....His beautiful answer to these remonstrances....Piety and eminent charity of the new church of Chablais....Fresh success of St. Francis of Sales....He leaves nothing untried to induce the ministers of the Calvinists to come to a public conference....They accept the offer, and then shamefully retract their consent; this gives occasion to the conversion of many persons of distinction....A minister is punished with death, for having embraced the Catholic religion....A proceeding so violent is condemned equally by the Catholics and the Calvinists....It gives occasion to fresh conversions....St. Francis of Sales undertakes that of the Baron of Awilly....He succeeds in this attempt; and this example is followed by a great number of conversions.

THE LIFE
OF
SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES,
BISHOP AND PRINCE
OF
GENEVA.

BOOK THE SECOND.

* **T**HE city of Geneva had no sooner abandoned the Catholic religion, and changed its form of government, by revolting from its bishop, and from the Duke of Savoy, who for some time had contended for the sovereignty of that state, than the inhabitants of Switzerland, who had furnished assistance in the execution of these two projects, conceived a design of dispossessing the Dukes of the territories which they held in the vicinity of that small republic. These consisted of the country of Vaud, of the Duchy of Chablais, and of the bailiwicks of Gex, Terny and Gaillard.

The country of Vaud, appeared by its situation, so inviting to the canton of Berne, that it was difficult to resist the temptation of seizing it; and Chablais and the bailiwicks were so contiguous to Geneva, that it was morally impossible for that republic, long to maintain its independence, unless the Duke should be removed from its neighbourhood, by a conquest of those small states, with which it was encircled. The war which took place between Francis I. and the Duke of Savoy, furnished an opportunity of carrying this design into effect. Chablais and the bailiwicks were accordingly reduced. The Catholic religion was banished from those parts; and those disorders committed, which have been described in the beginning of this history.

After the conclusion of the peace between Henry II. the son of Francis the first, and Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, the Swiss were constrained to restore to the Duke Chablais and the bailiwicks; but an article was cautiously inserted in the treaty, for the purpose of preventing the re-establishment of the Catholic religion; affairs remained in this situation during the life of Emmanuel Philibert; but Charles Emmanuel his son, having succeeded his father, the inhabitants of Geneva, who bore with extreme impatience the

disadvantage of having so powerful a neighbour, engaged the Swiss to violate the treaty which they had made with his father. They brought into the field an army capable of retaking Chablais and the bailiwicks, and gained possession a second time.

This usurpation lasted only, till the Duke was enabled to raise an army. The inhabitants of Switzerland and of Geneva, too weak to oppose any resistance, were constrained to yield to superior force. The Duke recovered his lost territories, and disposed his garrisons in such a manner, as afterwards facilitated the re-establishment of the Catholic religion. The Duke not considering himself bound, to observe a treaty, which his enemies had been the first to violate, and convinced that as long as his subjects professed a religion different from his own, he could place no reliance on their fidelity, entertained very serious thoughts of re-establishing the Catholic religion in Chablais and the three bailiwicks. The advantages which he had gained over his enemies, enabled him to employ force, as they had shewn him the example in forcing his subjects to abandon the religion of their fathers; but he preferred lenient measures, or rather considered it a duty to resort to them in the first instance, and to reserve to himself the power

of proceeding to more violent means, if circumstances should call for additional vigour.

With this view he wrote to the bishop of Geneva, requesting him to select a certain number of persons qualified by their learning and exemplary conduct, and in all respects calculated to labour with a prospect of success at the conversion of the inhabitants of Chablais and the three bailiwicks; he promised to protect them and to support their apostolic efforts with the whole weight of his authority; at the same time he sent a formal commission, to be produced as an attestation, that these missionaries were employed by his orders; he also issued injunctions to the different governors in those parts, to support them by all means in their power in the duties of the ministry.

*The bishop of Geneva, on receiving this communication from his Sovereign, returned thanks to God for his goodness in providing means to look for his wandering sheep, who, however they might have strayed, did not less belong to his fold. He then assembled the clergy of the cathedral, of the town and of the country; and having

* Claud Granier. Aug. of Sales. Life St. Franc. B. II.

read to them the letter, which he had received from his sovereign, he observed to them that Chablais and the three bailiwicks which composed the finest and most populous part of the diocese of Geneva, had groaned for more than sixty years under the yoke of heresy; that God after having abandoned these people for so long a time to the spirit of error, and to the desires of their own heart, had at length looked on them with those eyes of mercy, which the greatest crimes, can never exhaust; that he had moved the heart of their prince; that he had employed the voice of their Sovereign to invite them to a spiritual conquest of countries so consigned to desolation; that it would be an instance of the most shameful prevarication, to refuse to hear and obey the call; that he asked for workmen to repair the ruins of the people of God; that he was willing to proceed at their head, without claiming any exemption from labour, in consequence of his age and infirmities; that he had assembled them to choose assistants in this holy enterprise. He was free to acknowledge, that there would be much to undergo, but, he could say with St. Paul, that his life was not dearer to him than his soul; he was ready to sacrifice his present existence to the duties of his ministry, and those whom he had associated in this holy vocation, he believed to be

animated with similar sentiments and dispositions. The object now before them, added the holy prelate, was not to go in quest of undiscovered shores, nor to carry the light of faith to nations, with whose manners and language they were unacquainted; but to labour at the conversion of their own countrymen, of subjects of the same prince, of people who were governed nearly by the same laws, and whom, the baptism which they had received might induce to return to the religion of their forefathers.

“ You are not to regard,” said he, “ the labours, which are to attend the enterprise, but those glorious rewards, with which your sufferings will be followed; and the same God who calls you to the assistance of your brethren, will himself be your guide, your strength, your protector and your crown.”

* The discourse of the bishop, far from inspiring those who heard him with the ardent zeal, with which he was animated, tended only to fill every heart with dismay. Each one with downcast looks, appeared fearful of meeting the eyes of the prelate; the prospect of the sufferings and dangers to which these would be exposed, who

* Idem ibid.

should be selected for the mission of Chablais, prevented any from offering their services; and far from seconding the zeal of the holy bishop, all seemed disposed to abandon him in this critical conjuncture.

Francis of Sales alone appeared affected with this address. Instead of the astonishment, which was painted on every countenance, he betrayed in his eyes and in his manner, a pious emotion, and an impatience dictated by zeal, to second the religious intentions of his prince, and of his bishop. Accordingly no sooner did the holy prelate turn to him to ask his opinion, than he replied with promptitude, that he was not only willing to follow his bishop in the proposed enterprise, but that he offered his services, if he should be thought capable, to conduct the business himself; he considered himself obliged to represent to his superior, that his great age and infirmities did not permit him to expose himself to the sufferings and fatigues, with which the proposed enterprise would be infallibly attended; if he was a bishop, he was at the same time a man, and should consider that his undertakings ought to be measured by his strength; that God demanded no more; that it was perfectly true that he insists on the general exercise of charity, and this he particu-

larly requires of pastors, more than of others; but he likewise requires discretion, and it is his will that zeal should be under the influence of prudence; if his bishop believed himself bound to sacrifice his life for the rebellious portion of his flock, he owed himself not less to that part, which had always preserved its fidelity; that it was sufficient on this occasion, that the work should be conducted by his orders, and that he had to imitate Moses, who remained in prayer on the mountain, while Josue fought in the plain.

He added, that he did not believe it necessary to send in the first instance a great number of missionaries to Chablais; that few would be sufficient to explore the country, and sound the dispositions of the people with respect to their return to the Catholic Church; that according to their success, a farther proportion might be employed, when the good bishop might in person crown the pious enterprise; that in the mean time he offered his services to enter first the provinces, which had revolted from the Church, and that he asked only for a small number of proper persons, possessed of a sufficient share of patience and constancy not to be disheartened with the first difficulties.

The whole assembly adopted the opinion of Francis: even the holy prelate yielded to the re-

monstrances, which were generally made to him in consequence of his advanced age and infirmities. Francis was then chosen to begin the mission of Chablais, and to assume the principal management of the work. But when it was proposed to select his associates, no one offered his services, but Lewis of Sales, of whom mention has been made in the first book of this history. * The bishop of Geneva could not endure the idea of suffering Francis to proceed to Chablais without more assistance; but as the zealous missionary insisted that a greater number was by no means necessary in the commencement of the mission, the prelate yielded to his reasons, and the assembly closed by offering the most fervent prayers, for the success of the holy enterprise.

On this occasion there appeared in the assembly something similar to the conduct of the Christians of Miletus, with respect to St. Paul. § The faithful struck with the appearance of dangers and even of death, with which that great apostle was threatened, if he went to Jerusalem, and alarmed with the predictions, that he was to be bound and loaded with chains; and to undergo extreme sufferings, attempted by every art of per-

* Aug. of Sales. Book II.

§ Acts xx. and xxi.

suasion to divert him from a journey, which ~~was~~ likely to deprive the Church of his services; but finding him inflexible in his resolution of departing, and observing his zeal to be superior to the fear of the greatest dangers, they submitted to the order of Heaven, and parted from him with tears in their eyes, repeating with resignation: *Let the will of the Lord be accomplished.*

The report that Francis of Sales was chosen to commence the mission of Chablais, and that he was determined to proceed thither on the first opportunity was no sooner spread in Annecy, than his friends were seized with alarm. They formed a judgment of what the Calvinists were likely to do to preserve their religion, from what they had done to establish it, and then imagined that he would expose himself to certain death, if alone and unprotected he should undertake what the Duke of Savoy had been unable to accomplish at the head of a powerful army. No one among them omitted any means in his power to dissuade him from the resolution, which he had formed. In vain they represented to him in the liveliest manner, the fatigues and dangers which he was going to encounter, and the inconsiderable appearance of success in his enterprise. They wrote on the subject to the Count and Countess of Sales, of

whom he intended to take leave before his departure. He would have been happy to perform this task by letter, in order to avoid the struggle, which he expected with persons the dearest to his heart; but as the castle of Sales, where they then resided, was on his road, his appearance in person became indispensable.

On this occasion, he had to contend with whatever the feelings of nature can suggest to shake the human heart. The Count of Sales, who by no means approved the intended mission, and who shewed the most decided disapprobation of the choice, that had been made of his son and of his nephew for the execution of a project, which he believed would completely fail, spared no pains to divert them both from their purpose. His age, his experience, the important transactions, which he had conducted with prudence, had ensured to him that share of esteem and authority, which gave a weight to his opinion. He communicated his sentiments without reserve; and had no hesitation to pronounce the mission of Chablais to be an enterprise defective in the plan, and more blameable in the execution; an enterprise, which exhibited more zeal than prudence, which might be attended with unpleasant consequences, and from which, according to all human calculation,

no good was likely to result. He represented in the liveliest colours, the obstacles which would retard their progress, the dangers which would affright them, and the indelible shame of having engaged in an enterprise, with such slender hopes of success. He added, that if he had not seen in their hands, the orders of the Duke and of the bishop, he never should have believed that two persons of their sense and discretion, could be capable of approving such a project; he assured them that he would write to both their employers, to represent the inconveniences of the concern, and to exhort them to alter their measures; and in the mean time, he forbade them by all the authority, which God had given him over them, to proceed farther, and obstinately persist in an enterprise which was so much above their strength.

While the Count was speaking, the Countess was bathed in tears, and manifesting emotions capable of softening a less feeling heart than that of her son. But that faith, which animates the just man, that confidence in God, which invigorates his heart, and influences his conduct, proved superior to the feelings of nature, and Francis replied with his usual meekness, that if the subject were to be considered in the light in which they placed it, the design which the Apostles had

formed, and had ~~to~~ happily carried into effect, of preaching the gospel to all the nations of the earth, and of undertaking the conversion of the world, must be treated as an extravagant project; that it was apparently much less probable, that twelve poor fishermen, destitute of knowledge, of eloquence, of property, and of protection, should succeed in their undertaking in defiance of the hostile powers of the world, than that some degree of success should attend the mission of Chablais; that, if every objection, which human reason may oppose, to a great plan, had been listened to, we should now be involved in the darkness of paganism; that he fully acknowledged the very great difference between Lewis of Sales and himself on one side, and those great men on the other, who were filled with the spirit of God, confirmed in grace, and supported by the power of working miracles; but that there was assuredly no comparison between their achievements and the mission under consideration; that in the present instance, nothing was to be done, but to make an application to people, in the name of the God, whom they adored, and of the prince, whom they honoured; to Christians, who had left the fold of the Church, to which they were invited to return; to Christians, who had received the same baptism, who admitted the same scriptures, who adopted

the ancient creeds, and followed so many observances in common with ourselves; that there was no danger of being considered as strangers, who came to establish the worship of unknown deities, and rob them of their fairest hopes; that so far from being crossed in this project by the ruling powers of the earth, they were perfectly well disposed; that their family was held in high consideration, and they would find in Chablais, persons connected by the ties of blood and of friendship, who would never suffer violence to be offered to two unarmed individuals, who were labouring for their salvation, and were invested with the authority of their Sovereign: he was ready to acknowledge that the undertaking presented considerable difficulties; that there would be dangers to encounter, and fatigues to endure; that possibly death might be the reward of their labours, as it had been of the Apostles, whose zeal they desired to emulate; but to this it might be replied, that similar dangers are encountered in a military life, and for a much less noble purpose; and assuredly it would be no matter of surprise, that he and his cousin should for the acquisition of an immortal crown, encounter those dangers, which so many faced for a transient share of glory, that died with them, and which, on many occasions, they were by no means sure of attaining.

The Count was evidently affected with this forcible address of his son, and he said, that if Francis believed himself called to the mission of Chablais, he should certainly withdraw his opposition; but he hoped that his son would consent, that measures should be concerted for his personal safety, and proper precautions observed, to enforce the respect due to the authority of the Church, and of his Sovereign, which could not be exposed to the contempt of people, who already shewed but too much propensity to resistance.

Francis, who could never endure that the suggestions of human prudence should have too much influence, when the cause of God was concerned, replied with warmth, that it was to him a matter of surprise, that cowardice could be allowed, only when the cause of God was to be maintained; that if he had followed a military life, as his birth and rank of eldest son appeared to demand, he should have incurred blame, if the sight of danger had stopped him in the execution of his duty; that on the contrary, having embraced the ecclesiastical state, and being engaged in this holy warfare, where there are combats to sustain, though with different weapons, against the enemies of God and his Church, he was now doomed to hear nothing but means of retreating, nothing

but difficulties and measures of precaution; as if it were less shameful to have recourse to flight on these occasions, than in the service of a temporal prince; he farther observed, that the ~~arm~~ of God was not shortened, nor was his power diminished; that he stood not in need of the assistance of men; that the weakest instruments were sufficient to ensure success to the greatest enterprises; and that strengthened as he was with the united authority of the Church and of his prince, he should be enabled to prevent, or to frustrate any attempt against his person.

After making these observations, he prepared for his departure. Taking Lewis of Sales by the hand, he said: "Let us go whither God calls us. There are combats, where victory can be gained only by flight. A longer stay will tend only to weaken our resolution; and others more intrepid may snatch away the crown, which is prepared for us."

* The Count astonished at the determined courage of his son, could no longer detain him. They parted, and the distressed father followed at a distance. Having gazed at the heroic missionaries,

* Idem ibid.

as long as they remained in sight, he returned to console the Countess, who was plunged into the deepest affliction, at the prospect of those dangers, to which she was convinced that a son so dear to her was going to be exposed.

Francis was now arrived at the confines of Chablais, and felt himself invigorated with a more ardent zeal, than he had yet experienced. At the sight of the place, which was to be the scene of his labours, he fell upon his knees, and melting in tears, begged of God to give a blessing to their entrance into the province, and to their abode there, to be their guide and their strength, to put into their mouths the words of life, and to inflame their hearts with such ardent charity, as might overcome the contradictions of men, and the obstacles, which the princes of darkness would be capable of raising to the reconciliation of these people to the Catholic Church, to which they were come to press them to return. Having finished his prayer, he turned to Lewis of Sales, and embracing him with great tenderness, he said; "A thought just occurs to my mind; we are entering this province, in order to perform the functions of Apostles; if we are desirous of success, we cannot imitate with too much care their apostolic conduct. Let us send back our horses,

proceed on foot, and be satisfied with the necessities of life." Lewis consented to the proposal, and they proceeded on foot to Allinges, a strong and well fortified place, situated at the foot of a mountain, detached from the adjoining heights. The Baron of Hermance, governor of the province for the Duke of Savoy, resided there, and kept the whole country in subjection, by the means of a strong garrison, which the Duke there supported. As he was an intimate friend of the house of Sales, and had a peculiar regard for Francis, he received his guests with the greatest demonstrations of joy, and entertained them in a manner proportioned to his esteem for their merit. After the first salutations, Francis presented three letters, one from the Duke of Savoy, another from the bishop of Geneva, and a third from the Count of Sales.

* The Duke commanded him, to receive and support, with all the authority, which he had in the province, the missionaries who should be sent by the bishop of Geneva, for the purpose of labouring at the conversion of the inhabitants of Chablais. The bishop named to him, the persons whom he had chosen for the employment, and

* Aug. of Sales. Book II.

begged him to take them under his protection. The Count of Sales conjured him, by the intimate and ancient friendship, which subsisted between them, to pay particular attention to his son and nephew, and to assist them with his counsels and authority.

The Baron of Hermance, having read these letters, replied; that he should execute with the utmost punctuality, and with equal pleasure, whatever was enjoined by his Sovereign, or requested by his dearest friends. He afterwards conducted them to a platform in the upper part of his castle, which commanded a view of the whole country; and pointing to the batteries of canon and to the garrison under arms, he said: * “ I hope we shall not need these resources, if the Calvinists are disposed to listen to you.” But the attention of Francis was engrossed with a sight, which made the deepest impression on his mind; he observed on all sides, the churches demolished, the monasteries in ruins, the crosses thrown down, towns, villages and hamlets in a state of desolation; the fatal consequences of the change of religion, and of the civil war, which it had occasioned in that fine province. At the sight

* Anon. Life of St. Francis of Sales. Aug. of Sales, ib.

of these mournful remains of the Catholic religion, which had formerly shone with so much splendor in Chablais, he was unable to restrain his tears; and following the impression of his sorrow, he piously exclaimed: "Lord, the people have revolted against thee and against thy anointed; they have entered thy inheritance; they have profaned thy temples; abolished thy worship; ruined thy sanctuary. Rise, O Lord, judge thy own cause, but judge it in thy mercy." He remained some time bathed in tears, without uttering a word; afterwards turning to the Baron of Hermance, he said: "These are great disorders; we want an eminent physician to remove them."

They afterwards conferred on the means to be adopted, in order to ensure success to the mission which they were about to open. The Baron of Hermance gave them excellent advice. He was not only a brave man, who by his military talents and his important services in the cause of his country, had gained the esteem and affection of his prince; but he possessed consummate experience, and a perfect knowledge of the disposition of the people whom he had to govern. His zeal for the Catholic religion was ardent; and the proofs which he had given of it, had led the Duke of Savoy to name him to the government of Chablais.

He represented to him with great judgment the difficulty of the enterprise, in which they were going to engage, and suggested the means of surmounting the obstacles in their way. He informed them that they would have to do with people who were in reality well disposed, simple, and illiterate, but invincibly obstinate, when their minds were under a delusion; that from a rooted belief that the preservation of their liberty depended upon that of their religion, they were prepared to proceed to the greatest extremities to defend it; that the neighbourhood of Geneva and Switzerland, which favoured their revolt, rendered them bold and enterprising; that their continual connection with those countries, and the form of ecclesiastical government introduced by Calvin and his followers, made them hostile to monarchy; that they remained in subjection to the Duke of Savoy with reluctance; that they had withdrawn themselves from the yoke as often as a favourable opportunity had presented itself, and that they would be ready to repeat the same practice whenever they could resort to it with a prospect of success; that the re-establishment of the Catholic religion would in time dissipate the seeds of rebellion, and excite an attachment to their lawful Sovereign; but that it was necessary to proceed with singular caution, as, the old faith had been repre-

sented to them in the most frightful colours; that they constantly looked on the Pope as antichrist, bishops and priests as his agents, the mass as a public profession of idolatry, the Catholics as idolaters and the laws of the Church as an insupportable tyranny; that they would have to do with ministers, whose general character was marked with presumption, who considered these people as a conquest, and who would leave nothing unattempted to preserve the prize.

The Baron of Hermance, drew from his own statement, a clear conclusion, that a considerable share of address, mildness and condescension was necessary; that essentials only were to be attended to; that they had to avoid all singularity, and the suggestions of zeal uninfluenced by prudence. He observed, that great patience was necessary to the success of their enterprise; that the least precipitation would disconcert their whole plan, and that time and the blessing of Heaven on their labours, would bring the business to a desirable conclusion.

He added, that their operations should commence at Thonon, the capital of the province, which was not so far from Allinges, as to prevent them from retiring to the latter place to sleep;

for independently of the danger there would be in remaining at Thonon, they would find no one either willing or bold enough to furnish them with lodgings; that there would be still greater risk in attempting to say mass; for which reasons, he offered them the chapel in his castle to satisfy their devotion, assuring them that every thing should be conducted with the most perfect safety and propriety.

Francis, whose mind was ever influenced, in the highest degree, with moderation and meekness, approved completely of the observations of the Baron of Hermance; he took notes of his directions, which he followed with the most scrupulous exactness, and proceeded to Thonon, accompanied by Lewis of Sales, and one servant only, with whose zeal and fidelity he was well acquainted. His equipage consisted of a bag, containing a bible and a breviary, which he frequently carried himself; he performed his journies on foot, with a staff in his hand, and every day walked two long leagues in a very uncultivated country, in order to return to Allinges to sleep; he never left his quarters in the morning without celebrating the Divine mysteries, and strengthening himself with the bread of the strong. As his constitution was robust and vigorous, and as

he had habituated himself much to fasting, custom soon enabled him to endure hunger, thirst, and all the fatigue inseparable from the arduous ministry which he had undertaken. His dress was simple, but free from affectation; and agreeably to the practice of that time, he generally wore short boots; the management of his hair and beard, which he adapted to the prevailing fashion, together with the whole of his dress, rendered him as to external appearance, but little different from those who were accounted respectable in the world. This conduct procured him admission to the houses of many Calvinists, whom he gained to the Church. Other missionaries, who were afterwards assigned to him as assistants, neglecting this precaution, and boasting how little attention they paid to the prejudices of these people in indifferent things, soon experienced obstacles, which they had extreme difficulty to surmount; so true it is, that the most trifling circumstances, in transactions with persons labouring under prejudice, are capable of counteracting the most important designs. Francis of Sales used to say on this subject, that he thought it not a matter of indifference, pertinaciously to adhere to the practice of indifferent things, when his neighbour did not regard them with the eyes of indifference.

From the same motive of charitable condescension, he determined never to make use of any injurious terms, in speaking of the Calvinists and their doctrine, and never to oppose to their insults and outrages, any thing but meekness and invincible patience. His associates in the mission of Chablais, blamed him on this account, and charged him with too kind attention to the enemies of the faith. They loudly declared that he did not sufficiently avail himself of the authority of his Sovereign, with which he was known to be invested ; but by departing from his principles of conduct, these accusers of Francis nearly counteracted the grand business in view, that of reconciling the people of Chablais to the Church ; and the plan proved ultimately successful, only by following his discreet conduct, to whom the whole honour of the proceeding was afterwards attributed.

His first step, on his arrival at Thonon, was to wait on the magistrates, and to present the letters addressed to them by the Baron of Hermance. These letters contained the substance of the communication, made to the Baron by the Duke of Savoy ; and he added from himself, that he placed Lewis and Francis of Sales, their dependants, and those who might hereafter be associated with them,

under their protection; that he committed to them the care of their persons, and that he would render them responsible for any attempt that should be aimed at their lives.

The magistrates of Thonon received these letters with much apparent respect, and promised to comply with the injunctions given; but no sooner was the report of their arrival spread through the town and the neighbourhood, than the people seemed disposed to rise. * It was said in terms extremely clear, that these papal emissaries should be driven away, who thus came to disturb them in the peaceful enjoyment of their religion; that they should be treated in such a manner, as to destroy all inclination to return; that moderation was a dangerous expedient, when they were in danger of losing the liberty of conscience, which they had obtained after so many struggles; that the Duke himself would be obliged to dissemble his resentment, and that the numbers involved in the guilt would prevent all research, and render punishment impracticable.

† While affairs bore this aspect at Thonon, sentiments still more hostile were entertained

* Aug. of Sales. life. Book II. † Idem ibid.

against the two missionaries at Geneva, which is distant from the former place, but four or five leagues. It was asserted, that the Duke, in sending them, having violated the two last treaties of peace, had released them from the observance of those compacts; that the succour of the Swiss, who were guarantees of the treaties, was to be implored; that a clear right existed of having recourse to arms; and that in the mean time, it was necessary to be rid of the two missionaries, in whatever manner, even by assassination, if they could not be forced otherwise to retire.

* An account of these sentiments having reached Thonon, contributed to inflame the resentment of the people against the two missionaries; their hostile disposition proceeded to such a length, that the resolution of Lewis of Sales was considerably shaken. He asked Francis with much earnestness what hopes of success they could possibly entertain among people so refractory: what prospect they had of even obtaining a hearing; he observed that if it was dangerous to appear in public, it must be an indication of temerity to proceed farther in their undertaking. He added, that he wished not to abandon so holy an enterprise, but

* Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

he believed, it would be found necessary to postpone it till a more favourable opportunity should present itself, when their measures might be better concerted; and that if it should happen, that the majesty of the prince should be violated by any injury offered to their persons, and the rights of hospitality infringed, they might be accused of having drawn, by their indiscretion, the horrors of war on their country, and would in some measure be responsible for the dreadful consequences, which usually ensue.

* But Francis, embracing him tenderly, observed that nothing had yet taken place, which might not have been reasonably expected; that it could not be supposed, that these people would rush from their abodes to meet them, and renouncing their ancient prejudices, would hasten in crowds to hear their doctrine; that as to themselves they were as healthy as when they left their homes; that these people would very seriously calculate consequences, before they proceeded to any injury against their persons; that it is the ordinary practice of the great mass of mankind, to raise a clamour; but when they observe any share of unshaken resolution, they gradually become

* Charles Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

accustomed to that, which at first appeared singular ; finally, that God had rescued his servants from greater dangers, and while He should continue His protection, they had nothing to dread from the impotent rage of men.

He added, that he believed enough had been done that day, and that it was proper to return to Allinges, to give an account to the Baron of Hermance, of what had passed at Thonon. " But," said he in a pleasant manner, " you must allow me to tell the tale ; for as fear enlarges the objects before it, I should be apprehensive , were you to give the narrative, that the evil might appear greater than it really is."

The Baron of Hermance being informed from themselves, of the nature of the reception, which they had experienced at Thonon, was not of opinion, that the mission should be abandoned, or even postponed to another time ; on the contrary, he judged, that the respect due to the Duke of Savoy required that it should suffer no interruption. * But he likewise thought it necessary to provide for the safety of the missionaries, and not abandon them to the insults of the populace,

* Charles Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

blinded by rage, obstinately attached to error, and misled by the emissaries of Geneva. On this account, he offered them a powerful escort from his garrison. * Francis peremptorily declined the offer, and protested to the Baron of Hermance, who pertinaciously adhered to this plan, that he would rather abandon the mission, than suffer the least violence to be offered to the inhabitants of Thonon, or ever give them any occasion of publishing to the world, that any constraint had been resorted to for their religious instruction. He moreover declared, that they had entered Chablais as apostles; that they were determined to preserve the same character, and that they would never employ any other arms against the Calvinists than the word of God. He candidly acknowledged, that temporal princes, had often been under the necessity of resorting to other methods, with considerable success; but the same indulgence could not be allowed to persons of their description; their functions were apostolical, and their conduct should bear some proportion to the character which they sustained.

The Baron replied, that he would inform the inhabitants of Thonon, that the escort, which he

* Anon. Book I.

wished to assign, was not intended to impose restraint on the town, but to keep the people within the bounds of duty, and to prevent them from proceeding to any extremities, which might be attended with fatal consequences. But the resolution of Francis remained unshaken; and all that the Baron could gain with the most importunate entreaties was, that he might write a second letter to the magistrates of the town, to explain to them their real interests, and again to render them responsible for all that might happen in opposition to the wishes and the authority of their Sovereign. In the mean time, Francis was induced to remain, till an answer should arrive.

In consequence of this resolution, the Baron of Hermance wrote to the magistrates of Thonon, informing them that the Duke of Savoy, in sending Francis of Sales into the province, had no intention of violating the liberty of conscience, or any privilege, which they enjoyed. A strong proof, observed the Baron, that constraint was not intended, might be seen in employing for the purpose two priests without pomp, without attendance, and without any weapons of defence, but the word of God: the Baron also remarked, that as they and their allies had been the first to violate the treaty, in which all innovations in reli-

gious concerns, were forbidden by an express clause, the Duke of Savoy was no longer bound by a compact, which had been thus slighted; that however he was determined not to impose on them any restraint, nor diminish their liberty in the slightest degree in an affair of so much consequence; but that there were many persons in Chablais, who desired to be instructed in the Catholic religion, which they had abandoned only in consequence of the violent measures, that had been employed; that the Duke ordered them to be left at complete liberty for that purpose; that for the accomplishment of this end, it was necessary that persons capable of giving religious instruction should be admitted into the province; that the people had nothing in their mouths but liberty of conscience, which they openly violated by refusing to suffer those who were disposed to embrace the Catholic religion, to accomplish their purpose with any safety; that the Duke took persons of this character under his protection; that he desired it clearly to be understood, that Francis of Sales should preach the Catholic doctrine without molestation; that no person should be forced to hear him, but that no violence should be employed against those, who were disposed to give him their confidence; finally, he declared them from that moment responsible for all the

harm, that might happen to Francis of Sales, or to any who might be associated with him in his pious enterprise.

The magistrates replied to this communication, by throwing the blame of past transactions on the populace, who are not easily controled on such sudden emergencies, as those in question, and by promising to employ their whole authority in enforcing the execution of the orders of their Sovereign with becoming respect.

Indeed Francis on his return to Thonon was received with more attention and regard; but he had not been long there, before he heard, that very secret and rigorous orders had been issued, not to listen to him, or to have with him any communication. These injunctions were executed so punctually, that Francis in the heart of Thonon, was as much deserted, as if he had been consigned to complete solitude. He however went daily from Allinges to Thonon, with as much punctuality, as if he had been called by the most pressing business; and he often performed the journey in weather so unpleasant and boisterous, that countrymen of the most robust constitution, had not courage to go into the open

air. * Rain, snow, ice, the most furious blasts, even the horrors of night were not sufficient to hinder him from undertaking the journey. The cold on some occasions was so piercing, that he appeared motionless with its effects, and in evident danger of death; but nothing could stop, or even abate the ardour of his zeal. In vain was he warned of the dangers, to which he exposed his person without any prospect of success; he always replied in the words of our Redeemer: "*Do you not know that I am about the work of my father, who is in Heaven?*"

He added, that God alone knew the time and season which he had fixed for the conversion of these poor people; that it would happen sooner than it could be imagined, and therefore he ought to be ready to avail himself of the fair prospect.

† The winter of this year was so severe, and the cold so intense, that his feet and legs were covered with sores. About this time, there took place another event of a singular nature, which

* Aug. of Sales. Book II. Anon. Book I.

† Aug. of Sales. Book II.

would have completely cooled a less ardent zeal than that with which he was inflamed. One day as he left Thonon at a later hour than usual, to return to Allinges, he was overtaken by the darkness of the night; in this perplexity, he lost his road, and after wandering about for a considerable time to no purpose, he arrived late at a village, but found every door shut. The ground was covered with snow, and the cold so extremely piercing, that during the whole day, the husbandmen had been obliged to remain at home with their flocks. He knocked at every door, entreating the inhabitants, by considerations of the most pathetic nature, not to let him perish with cold; but they proved to be Calvinists, and no one would give him admission. To complete his misfortunes, his valet named him, hoping that this would excite some consideration; but the device remained without effect. * God, who never abandons his servants, enabled him to find, in this extremity, the oven of the village, still retaining some portion of heat; into this asylum he and his servant made their way, and were thus preserved from death, which otherwise must inevitably have ensued.

* Anon. Book II.

* On another occasion he was in danger of perishing, by the cruel insensibility of the inhabitants of a different village. He had arrived there in the night, in a tremendous storm of rain, and was unable to obtain a shelter by every entreaty, which he could make; he was accordingly obliged to spend the night in the open air, exposed to the inclemency of the weather; praising God, like the apostles, that he had been thought worthy of suffering for the glory of his name.

Events of this unpleasant nature, would have induced any other person, less resigned to the orders of God, and less zealous for his glory, to devise means of avoiding such perilous circumstances; but Francis, who was incapable of shewing a scrupulous regard for his own safety, when the honour of God was concerned, soon after experienced another adventure scarcely inferior to any thing that has been related. On his departure from Thonon, to go to Allinges, he met a Calvinist, who was waiting for him, and who told him, that he was much edified with his good example, his patience, his meekness, and the incredible pains he took to procure the salvation of people who repayed him with such ingratitude;

* Aug. of Sales. Book II.

that on comparing his life, with the conduct of their ministers, he was led to suppose, that purity of doctrine might be united with exemplary manners; that in consequence, he applied to him for instruction; and that he conjured him, by the blood of Jesus Christ, which was shed for his salvation, to have compassion on him, and not to postpone his spiritual concerns.

* The night was now approaching; and it was more dangerous to Francis to delay his departure, as he had a forest to pass. Under these circumstances, it appeared natural to defer his instructions till the next day; this was the sentiment of Lewis of Sales; and his servant, who never left him, and who had shared with him his past dangers, implored him in the most earnest manner to adopt it. But Francis replied, that no one was assured of the morrow; and that he should all his life reproach himself with having neglected the salvation of a soul, from an apprehension of contingent danger, from which he might be preserved by the bounty of God.

The prediction of Lewis of Sales was verified by the event. Francis remained so long with the

* Aug. of Sales. Book II.

Calvinist, that night overtook them on their entrance into the forest, and the darkness was such, as rendered it impossible for them to distinguish their road. In the mean time, the howlings of the wolves, the cries of the bears and other savage beasts, that descended from the mountains, conveyed something so terrible, as to shake the most determined courage; the servant was palsied with fear; Lewis of Sales scarcely discovered more resolution. Francis alone, full of confidence in God, imparted consolation to his attendants, and promised them in His name, that they should be freed from the threatening danger, as Daniel had been delivered from the lion's den; he told them, that the hazard to which they were exposed, for having afforded assistance to a soul, that asked for it in the name of God, bore no proportion to the situation of that illustrious prophet. At this moment the moon rose, when he perceived, that they were not far from a venerable ruin, which presented some remains of an arch, that afforded them a shelter from the inclemency of the weather.* They entered the place, and spent there the remaining part of the night. But Francis was unable to enjoy the smallest share of repose. As the moon grew brighter, he discover-

* Aug. of Sales. Book II. Anon. Book I.

ed, that the ruin was a part of a church, which had been destroyed by the Calvinists. This discovery recalled to his mind the deplorable state of religion in Chablais; it presented a gloomy picture of temples overthrown, priests banished, the ancient worship suppressed, heresy triumphant, truth discarded; of the insensibility and almost invincible obstinacy of the people, in resisting the voice of God, who called them to the Catholic Church, from which they had been, by error and seduction, so violently torn. In this state of mind, seated on the ruins of the temple, like Jeremy on the remains of Jerusalem, filled like the prophet with a holy sorrow, he piously exclaimed in similar strains: "where are the secluded saints, who once inhabited these forests, and made them resound day and night with the praises of the Lord. O where are those virgins, who followed the immaculate lamb; those priests devoted to his service, those temples consecrated to his glory? How much is the gold darkened! How is its beauty tarnished! How profusely are the stones of the sanctuary thrown about in the public places! To whom shall I compare thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? To whom shall I say that thou art likened, O virgin, daughter of Sion? How shall I comfort thee? for thy grief is become great like the ocean; who can find a remedy for thy ills?

Thy prophets have had for thee only false and extravagant visions; they have not discovered to thee thy iniquity, in order to excite thee to repentance: for thee have they seen in these visions only a degree of elevation which had no existence, and defeats of thine enemies which were never to take place. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, be at length converted to the Lord thy God."

The morning surprised Francis engaged in these pious reflections; he awakened his companions, who had been immersed in sleep; they again found their way, and arrived at Allinges. Those who are so filled with the spirit of the world, as to be insensible to the excellence of any objects, unconnected with their passions, will have a difficulty in believing, that such a warm and lively interest in the glory of God, can be excited in the human breast. But men endowed with an apostolic spirit, who have tasted, how good the God of Israel is to those, who possess an upright heart, will find nothing in this relation, which is not perfectly conformable to what they have themselves experienced on similar occasions.

* Whatever judgment may be formed of this circumstance, the sentiments and even the expres-

* Aug. of Sales. Book II.

sions here preserved, are ascribed to St. Francis of Sales by his biographers, on this memorable occasion.

* But if these apostolical labours appeared useless with respect to the inhabitants of Chablais, the consequences of them to the garrison of Allinges were widely different. The piety of Francis, his zeal for the salvation of souls, and his uncommon meekness, had procured him the esteem and confidence of the officers and the men: this disposition he made use of to gain them to God, and to introduce among them His fear and love. He began by converting to the faith some soldiers who were Calvinists; and by the blessing of Heaven of his efforts, their conversion was so complete, that they reformed their lives, and became as exemplary in their morals, as they were firm in their faith. They assisted him in bringing some Catholic soldiers to a better, and a more Christian way of living.

† Three capital disorders were prevalent among the troops; blasphemy, drunkenness, and the

* Idem *ibid.*

† Anon. Life of St. Francis. Book I. Aug. of Sales. Book II.

practice of terminating disputes by duels. Francis undertook to reform these vices; and his success exceeded his expectations. His biographers relate, that he regulated this garrison so well, that both officers and men, appeared rather a collection of religious persons, than a military troop. It cannot on this account be asserted, that he engaged them in practices, incompatible with their state; no man ever knew better than Francis of Sales, how to direct every one agreeably to his situation in life. But he gave them so strong an impression of the judgments of God, he convinced them so completely, that in proportion as their profession in life, obliged them to expose their persons, they ought to be more guarded in avoiding the fatal consequences of an unhappy death, that he changed them into other men, and produced among them that uprightness of heart, and that sincere piety, which far from being incompatible with courage and military valour, tends in no small degree to increase it, and to give it greater lustre.

On this occasion there was to be observed something similar to what passed, in the time of the apostles, at the period of the conversion of the Gentiles. Military men were the first who were called to the faith in the person of Cornelius

the centurian, and of some other soldiers; thus did God shew us in the clearest manner, that no station of life is incompatible with sanctity. In the same manner, the conversion of Chablais began by that of the garrison of Allinges, as if the Almighty had been willing to give a sanction to the mission of Francis, by rendering it similar to that of the apostles.

* At length the time destined by Divine Providence for the conversion of Chablais approached; in vain did Geneva by her emissaries oppose the progress of the work; in vain did the ministers of Calvinism, raise obstacles to defeat the purpose, by cabals, by calumnies, and seditious discourses. There is no force, no counsel, which can prevent the execution of the resolves of Almighty wisdom; and the manner in which the hearts of men are influenced on these occasions, is followed by the effect, with a certainty proportioned to the acting cause, while the liberty of the creature is preserved inviolate.

Whatever prejudices might have prevailed among the inhabitants of Thonon against Francis, they were greatly struck with his piety, his meek-

ness, his invincible patience, his indefatigable zeal for the salvation of souls. In vain did the ministers of Calvinism attribute his proceedings to a secret ambition, which labours to attain its purposes, by means indeed difficult; but which pursues its end by those methods, that appear to be of an opposite tendency. The splendor of his virtues, his disinterestedness, the little pains he took to repel the calumnies, with which his reputation was aspersed, the support of his Sovereign, on which he could rely, though he availed himself of it in a very slight degree, his confidence in God, which seemed to be his only resource, the innocence and simplicity of his actions, very far remote from any human views and considerations; all this spoke so loudly in his favour, that the most hardened adversaries were unable to refrain from the satisfaction of listening to his instructions.

Besides, as the officers and soldiers of the garrison of Allinges, frequently went to Thonon, they there spoke with the utmost freedom of the superior virtue and exalted qualities of Francis, while their conduct exhibited less equivocal proofs of his merit. Instead of that unbridled licentiousness, that libertinism in which they before gloried; instead of blasphemies, which excited hor-

ror, those frequent duels, which robbed God of so many souls, and the state of so many members, these military men were observed to be orderly in their conversation; grave and decorous in their actions; mild, equitable, submissive to the laws, and exact in the discharge of every duty in proportion as they acted from purer and more elevated motives, and accomplished from conscientious views, what before had been performed from human respect. Beholders could not help admiring a change, in which the hand of the Almighty was so visibly distinguished. At the same time, the instrument employed in producing this work, naturally attracted esteem. Thus did God dispose the hearts of men in favour of his servant; thus did He prepare the way for the achievements, which make the subject of the ensuing part of our history.

Francis, having now perceived that the aversion, which the people of Chablais had conceived for him, was daily abating, and that his company was not avoided with a degree of studious attention, believed that he might with propriety and effect visit the houses of private persons, and show proper civility and attention. He accordingly adopted this plan, frequently conversed on indifferent subjects, and was pleased gradually to gain their confidence. This extraordinary

meekness certainly gave to his conversation a charm, of which the effect was irresistible. A certain prepossession was excited in his favour, as soon as he had opened his lips; and with an infallible certainty he at once gained the esteem and affection of those with whom he conversed. The haughty and imperious manners of the ministers of the Calvinists, formed a complete contrast of his mild and gentle deportment; and the harshness, with which they treated him in different companies, the reproaches and injuries, with which they loaded him, considerably enhanced his moderation and meekness, and served to raise him in the esteem of those, who daily witnessed the hasty sallies of his adversaries, and the invariable patience, with which he endured such scenes.

Affairs were, in this situation, when Francis received intelligence that two gentlemen of his acquaintance, had just left town, to proceed to the country, in order to terminate a dispute by a duel. He hastened to the spot with a zeal, which never left him. They were already engaged in a furious combat; and the rage painted on their countenances left no doubt, that the affair would end in the destruction of one or perhaps both of the parties. Francis separated them at the hazard

of his life, and succeeded in representing to them in such lively colours the enormity of single combats, forbidden by every law of heaven and earth, and the danger to which they had exposed themselves of perishing eternally, for a mistaken point of honour, that he reconciled them on the spot, and obliged them to consent to a mutual embrace. But the grace which attended his ministry, produced still more wonderful effects; it changed the combatants into new men; they both made to him a general confession, and amended their lives. One of them in particular, more impressed with the event than the other, abandoned the world, and retired to a country-house, agreeably situated near Thonon. This spot was all that remained to him of the wrecks of a dissipated fortune.

There laying aside every false impression with respect to those objects, by which he had so often exposed his soul to eternal ruin, he considered in the bitterness of his heart all those unfortunate days, he had spent in offences against his maker, and in a general inattention to his salvation. Francis, who had reconciled him to God, and had been the adviser of this plan of retirement, never lost sight of him, but visited him daily. He was aware, that persons recently converted,

like young trees, need very careful cultivation; and that it is generally very hazardous to leave them too much to themselves. But what principally attracted notice in this transaction was, that he effectually excited in his penitent, sentiments of those virtues, which distinguished his own character. From a person haughty, passionate and vindictive, as he was, he became mild, patient, easy, and affable. As he was far advanced in years, he had to overcome long and inveterate habits of vice; but the practice of virtues, contrary to his natural dispositions and inclinations appeared so congenial to him, that he seemed to offer himself no violence.

As this nobleman had long pursued a military career with considerable reputation, and had acquired that experience, which is necessary for the discharge of the duties of civil life, the nobility of the neighbourhood, and the leading persons of Thonon, paid him frequent visits. He spoke with grateful feelings of the favour which God had conferred on him, and in high terms of commendation of Francis, who had been employed as the instrument in reclaiming him from his evil courses; a desire was thus excited of forming the acquaintance of the pious missionary, and of enjoying his conversation. Francis seconded these views; and

by the blessing of Heaven on their endeavours, that house became the general asylum of penitents.

Francis there began to hold regular conferences. He first brought his hearers to an acknowledgment, that schism is one of the greatest evils, which can befall the Church;* that unless the most substantial reasons be produced to justify the separation, it is alone sufficient to bring eternal perdition upon the authors of it, upon those who are engaged in it, and upon all who adhere to it; that if those who left the pale of the Catholic Church did wrongly by such a proceeding, those who only followed them, are obliged to return to the centre of unity; and that neither temporal interest, connections, human considerations, esteem for their pastors, tenderness for those whom they had till then looked upon as their brethren, neither fear, menaces nor outrages of any kind could exempt them from this duty.

He likewise maintained that the Catholic Church stood, with respect to them, on a different ground from other societies, which professed a belief in Christ; that their fathers had lived and died in it,

* Dailé in his Apology admits this as a certain truth.

and that many of them had there received baptism; that they had been fostered and instructed by its parental care; and that they were indebted to the Catholic Church solely, for the scriptures which she had preserved, and put into their hands. He added, that it was not his actual purpose to display either the extent, the antiquity, or the succession of the sacred ministry, which however were marks of the true Church; but he thought, it extremely harsh to condemn to eternal flames, without any examination of the case, all those from whom they had received an existence; and it appeared to him the height of injustice to pronounce, without hearing the cause, a sentence of condemnation, against a Church, to which, notwithstanding their rooted aversion, they had so many obligations.

He farther observed, that there was an extraordinary degree of injustice in this conduct, as the Church perpetually complained of the injury done to her; that she was injuriously accused of corrupting the deposit of faith, and of relinquishing the belief of her ancestors, and that she was represented in such hideous forms, that her children were unable to distinguish her appearance; that he was ready to justify her conduct by demonstrative evidence; and in a manner satisfactory to the

meanest understanding, as nothing was farther necessary for this purpose, than to explain her doctrine with neatness and precision.

As the observations of Francis of Sales were extremely rational, he was listened to with great attention ; he availed himself of this circumstance, and continued his discourse. He remarked, that for a considerable time, the Catholic Church had been accused of idolatry, of destroying the mediation of Christ, and of paying to the saints, to their images and their relics, a species of worship, due only to God. Those who assisted at the conference, acknowledged, that these were the leading motives of their separation. Francis replied, that no inferior motives could justify a schism, which had occasioned so many rebellions, had deluged the country with blood, and had produced such fatal effects; but unfortunately for those who had acted on these grounds, the charges were destitute of foundation ; the Church was by no means guilty in any of these articles ; that to be convinced of the truth of this assertion, they had only to learn her real sentiments on these points, not from her enemies, who were industrious to disguise them, but from herself.

He declared therefore in her name, and he professed himself ready to seal the declaration

with his blood, that the Catholic Church adores only one God, creator and Lord of all things; that this adoration, according to her doctrine, consists in believing, with a constant, humble and submissive faith, whatever it has pleased him to reveal; in adhering to him by hope, in loving him above all things, with all the powers of our soul, as the only and true good, which alone, by its enjoyment, can constitute our eternal happiness; that she looks on all, that is not God, as finite and dependant beings, which owe their existence and preservation to him; and that far from believing that it is lawful to apply that adoration, which is due to God alone, to any created object whatever, the Catholic Church condemns such a practice as the height of impiety.

As to the mediation of Christ, he said, that the Catholic Church, far from destroying it, professes to owe every thing to him; that her existence and her hopes centre in him; that she asks for every thing, hopes for every thing, and returns thanks for all favours by him; and that she places in this mediation between God and man, all hopes of salvation. He added, that she believes that all our sins are pardoned by the pure mercy of God, through the merits of Jesus Christ; that we are indebted to a bounty wholly gra-

tuitous for that justice which is in us by the Holy Ghost ; that all the good works, which we perform, are so many gifts of his glory ; that eternal life is to be proposed to the faithful, both as a grace, which is mercifully promised by the mediation of Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind, and as a recompence, which is faithfully given to the good works in virtue of this promise ; but that the Catholic Church has always taught, that these good works are the gifts of God, that we can do nothing of ourselves ; but that we can do every thing in him, who strengthens us, and that all our confidence ought ever to be placed in Jesus Christ.

Never did astonishment equal that which was manifested by the Calvinists, who assisted at this conference ; they had been accustomed during their whole lives to hear sentiments attributed to the Catholic Church, widely different from those which Francis assured them belonged to her ; they had heard her accused by their ministers of paying that worship to creatures, which is due to God alone, of destroying the mediation of Christ, by assigning to him associates before the throne of God, of raising free will too high at the expence of grace, and of weakening the satisfaction of the Redeemer of mankind, by the doctrine,

which teaches the necessity of good works to salvation.

But their astonishment increased when Francis added, that the Catholic Church has always taught, that Jesus Christ God and man, was alone capable, in consequence of his infinite dignity, of offering to God a sufficient satisfaction; that this satisfaction was infinite; that our Redeemer paid the whole price of our redemption; that nothing was wanting to the plenitude of this price, as it was infinite; and that the punishment reserved for penitential purposes, by no means proceed from a defect, in the payment of the ransom, but from the order established by God, to restrain mankind within the boundaries of duty by just apprehensions of suffering, by a reparation proportioned to the scandals that might be given, and by the exercises of a salutary discipline.

This last explanation had the full effect of giving to the persons who assisted at the conference, far different sentiments from those, which they had hitherto entertained, concerning the doctrine of the Catholic Church. They began to believe that the Church was injured by false representations; that their own ministers, were not suffi-

ciently acquainted with her doctrine, or that they had their reasons to disguise it ; and that it would be equally easy to refute their calumnies on other controverted points, as well as on those, which had been the subject of discussion. But Francis being unwilling to load their memories too much, postponed to another conference, the explanation of the other articles, which he had himself proposed to their consideration. Thus closed this memorable assembly, which was followed by others with no less success.

In the mean time rumours, that such assemblies were held, began to be generally circulated at Geneva, at Thonon, and in Chablais ; and the sentiments of people were much divided, respecting the manner, in which Francis had explained the Catholic doctrine. Some asserted, that the intercourse, which he had held with the Calvinists, had inspired him with better sentiments, and that in time, he might be led to adopt their notions. Others roundly declared, that he had not faithfully represented the doctrine of his own Church, and that, if what he had advanced were to become public, it would be disavowed. Some were found to say, that the desire to make conversions, and to acquire celebrity among his own people, had induced him to disguise his real sen-

timents, and to approach as near as possible to the doctrine of the reformers; and that he would never dare to maintain in public, what he had proposed in private assemblies, in presence of a small number of suborned and prejudiced witnesses. But what was extremely singular in the history of these transactions, the most skilful of the ministers, were either so little acquainted with the belief of the Catholic Church, or conceived such violent prejudices against her, that they were either unable or unwilling to recognise her doctrine, in the explanations of Francis. This is a certain proof, that party spirit, prejudice and animosity, have the most extensive influence on the differences that divide the Churches; and that if the reformers were desirous of peace, we should soon come to a mutual understanding.

Francis having heard what was reported of his conferences and his sentiments, believed himself obliged to give a reply, lest his silence might admit of an uncandid interpretation, and make an unfavourable impression on the minds of the weak. For this reason he published an account of what had passed in the assemblies he had held.

He then represented with his usual meekness, that neither the fidelity which he owed to his

charge, nor his regard for his own character, allowed him to adulterate the doctrine of the Catholic Church, or disguise her sentiments; that the manner, in which he had lived among them, should have given them a better opinion of his sincerity; that he wished indeed with much anxiety for their return to the Catholic Church, but that this anxious wish, should never induce him to prevaricate, nor to employ improper means to attain his end; that in pursuance of these sentiments, he had explained the Catholic doctrine, not only in conformity to his own principles, or those of private doctors, but agreeably to the exposition given by the council of Trent. That this council could not be charged with ignorance of the doctrine of the Catholic Church, which it represented, nor with a design to adulterate and falsify it; that the Church on the other hand could not be reproached with abandoning the doctrine of the council, as a part of the animosity which the reformers conceived for her, originated in the public profession, which she made to adhere to what had been there decided; that it was incontestably true that he had explained the Catholic doctrine with all possible fidelity and exactness; but that they must candidly acknowledge, that their misconceptions concerning this doctrine, arose from this circumstance, that they had

no knowledge of it, but from the frightful representations of their own ministers; that accustomed to the hideous colours, in which it was represented in their conventicles, they were unable to recognise it, when it was displayed in its native dress; that in proportion to the care, which was taken to explain it in all its purity, did they contend, that the doctrine was changed or disguised; and whenever their prepossessions were rectified, they imagined, that their instructors were become their proselytes.

After these prefatory remarks, he explained the Catholic doctrine on the adoration due to God alone, on the mediation and satisfaction of Christ, in the manner already related; and he cited those passages from the council of Trent, which justified what he had advanced, in order that his readers might verify them, and no longer accuse him of having disguised or adulterated the sentiments of the Church; and that they might cease to assert, that he would be considered by those of his own communion, as having ill explained the Catholic doctrine.

He afterwards expounded, with the same fidelity, the belief of the Church on the intercession and the invocation of the Saints, and on the ho-

nour, which is paid to their images and their relics. He said on this subject, that the Catholic Church professed to believe, that the Saints reigning with Christ, so far from having lost any portion of that charity, which induced them to pray for the Church, while they were on earth, had attained the perfection of charity ; that they offer up prayers for us, but that they offer them through Jesus Christ ; that the Church addresses them in the same spirit, in which we beg of our brethren on earth to pray for us and with us, to our common Lord, in the name of our common mediator, who is Jesus Christ ; that when she addresses the Almighty, she invariably says, *have mercy on us, hear us*, but to the Saints, she says, *pray for us* ; that in whatever terms these prayers might be expressed, she attributes to them no other meaning, than what is comprised in these words, *pray for us*.

He observed, that this manner of praying, so far from transferring to creatures what God has reserved to himself, could on no occasion be addressed to the supreme being ; that if these words *pray for us*, which are directed to the Saints, could be supposed to diminish the confidence, that should be placed in God, St. Paul would not have so often repeated ; *My brethren pray for us*,

since such words would have been censurable, if addressed to the living, as well as to the dead.

Farther, he stated that the Catholic Church by no means ascribes to the Saints, either immensity, a knowledge of the secrets of hearts, or any of the divine perfections, as idolaters have done, and as she is falsely accused of doing herself; that she believes only that God communicates to them our wants and our prayers, either in the manner in which he frequently discovered to his prophets those events, the knowledge of which is reserved to himself, or in some other unknown way, on which the Church has not pronounced; but that she constantly professes that the Saints enjoy no advantage, possess no knowledge of future events, or any power of assisting us by their prayers, but as far as it pleases God to permit; after such a declaration, that she can never be charged with idolatry, in consequence of the honour shewn to the Saints.

As to the veneration paid to images, Francis referred to the express words of the council of Trent, which forbids the faithful to acknowledge in them any divinity, or power, that should attach reverence, to ask of them any favour, or to place in them any confidence; but requires that

the honour paid to them be referred to the originals which they represent, as the honour shewn to the originals themselves is ultimately referred to God, who raised them to sanctity and to glory, as he is the end and the principal object of all religious worship.

He added, that the reformers themselves must acknowledge, that God did not forbid the use of all images, but of such only, as were intended to represent the divinity as corporally present, and to worship them as endowed with some divine power;* he maintained, that the Catholic Church never admitted any of this kind, that she never presumes to represent God, as he is, a spiritual being, invisible, infinite, and not admitting any external representation; but that she believes he may be innocently exposed to the eyes of the faithful, under the figures, in which he has been pleased to appear to the prophets; in a word, that the Catholic Church does not worship images, but uses them only, to elevate the mind to the originals, which they represent; and these sentiments distinguish her from idolaters, who cannot without extreme injustice be compared to her.

* Catechism of the Calvinists.

As to the honour shewn to the relics of the Saints, Francis maintained, that it is so ancient, that it has always been practised so universally and so constantly in the Church, that God has authorized it by miracles so splendid and so certain, such as those recorded by St. Austin, who was an eye-witness of them, that it can never be condemned without rashness ; that this veneration is so far from diverting us from the worship due to God alone, that we consider relics as the precious remains of bodies which, as St. Paul observes, have carried and glorified God.

Finally, Francis offered to justify the Catholic Church with the same demonstrative evidence, on all the contested articles, either in writing, or in regular conferences, at the option of the ministers ; and he entreated them to read the printed account with dispassionate coolness, and in the same spirit of charity, as had induced him to compose it.

But they were far remote from these pacific dispositions ; they contented themselves with renewing their ancient calumnies, with the addition of others ; it was even resolved by their party, to procure the assassination of the gentleman, who

had afforded an asylum to Francis, for the purpose of holding the conferences, of which we have spoken. The design of this horrid resolve was to prevent others, by so terrible an example, from forming any such connection with the missionary.* A Calvinist gentleman, among his relatives, undertook the execution of this detestable purpose. It is apparent, that he did not mean to proceed without accomplices, as the Catholic party obtained intelligence of the design. The destined victim was advised to take such precautions, as would render him superior to his adversary; and he wanted not friends, who would have fled to his assistance, on the least signal of danger, with which he was threatened; but he replied, that if his enemy came alone, he wanted no aid to defend his person; but that if he should be assailed by numbers, he had ample time to provide for self defence. The day after the intelligence was obtained, the Calvinist gentleman waited on him, with the easy and disengaged appearance of a friend, seeking for amusement; he was unattended, and seemed to have no weapon, but his sword. The Catholic received him with his usual gentleness and ease; they spent the day together, without any attempt on the

* Anon. Life of St. Francis. Book I.

part of the Calvinist ; whether he felt any reluctance in executing so shameful a deed, or whether an opportunity was wanting of carrying into effect his horrid purpose.*

The following day, the Catholic gentleman, who wished to speak to him freely, induced him to take a walk in the country ; they went out unattended ; and the Catholic having led him to a retired spot, where he feared no intrusion, opened to him the intelligence, which he had received of his design. The Calvinist changed colour ; but the Catholic assured him, that he had nothing to fear from his resentment ; that if the Calvinistic creed allowed the assassination of relatives and friends, the Catholic religion requires, after the example of Jesus Christ, the pardon of the most virulent enemies. He then embraced the Calvinist with a cordiality, that overcame him ; the gentleman in confusion, acknowledged his design, asked his pardon, and protested that in future he should never find a greater friend than himself.

But the time of mercy for this gentleman was come. The same grace, which of a most ardent

* Ibid.

persecutor of the Church, made the most zealous of its Apostles, began to move his heart, and he desired a private interview with Francis. The holy man completed in private conferences, what the good example of the Catholic gentleman had begun; the penitent abjured his errors, and became as zealous an advocate for the Catholic religion, as he had been an ardent partisan of Calvinism.

The conversion of this gentleman made a considerable noise in the world, as it was known, that he was so zealously devoted to Calvinism, as to adopt the most violent measures in its defence; and it was not easily conceived, how he had passed so suddenly from one extreme to the other. Those who ascribed all transactions to human means, and were ignorant of the force, which divine grace had annexed to the ministry of Francis, loudly proclaimed that he had been gained by artful promises; others declared that a great sum of money had been actually paid into his hands. But these rumours gained but little credit; as it was generally known, that Francis conducted the mission of Chablais at his own expence, and that the charities which he bestowed on the new converts, often reduced him to the want even of the necessaries of life.

But if this conversion excited considerable sensation in Chablais, the impression made by the late publication of Francis, was yet stronger. The doctrine of the Catholic Church was justified in terms so clear in that performance, that it was unanswerable. For it became necessary to prove, either that the Council of Trent had been unacquainted with the Catholic doctrine, or that Francis had misrepresented the meaning of the Council by false citations, or that the Church had not adopted the sentiments of that assembly. But such answers appeared so unsatisfactory, even to the ministers, that they thought it prudent not to choose that ground. In the mean time their silence caused an impression extremely unfavourable to Calvinism, and fresh conversions were daily made. These were no longer conducted with so much secrecy; and the usual reserve and concealment in frequenting the instructions of Francis, were no longer observed: friends introduced their friends, fathers their children, masters their servants; and people from the country came on purpose to Thonon to hear his discourses. This rapid progress alarmed the Calvinists, while the new converts displayed such ardour for the personal safety of Francis, as rendered any attempt against his life a very dif-

ficult concern.* The attempt however, was made; two assassins were hired for the purpose; a part of the money, which was agreed on, was paid in advance, and the rest was promised after the execution of the deed. An engagement was thus formed to assassinate Francis on the road of Allinges, at the time of his return; but as the pious missionary had friends who were unknown to the Calvinists, an attempt of this nature could not be concealed from the new converts. Some lamented him, as if the stroke had been already struck; others deliberated on the best means of preserving him from the fury of his enemies; but all appeared to think, that whatever precautions might be taken for his safety, the Calvinists, would finally succeed in sacrificing him to their hatred, or to the security of their religion.

Full of these melancholy reflexions, they hastened to Francis, and apprised him of the danger, to which he was exposed; but he spoke to them with so much energy and feeling of confidence in God, of the glory and happiness of martyrdom, that he imparted to them a share of the consolation, with which he was filled amidst the sur-

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

rounding danger. He however, accepted the offer which some of them made to him, of attending him to Allinges. They departed in company; but scarce had they entered a wood, through which they had necessarily to pass, when the two assassins started from a bush, where they had lain concealed, and presented themselves before him with drawn swords. In this extremity of danger, Francis preserved his usual presence of mind; he forbade his attendants to make use of their defensive weapons; and advancing towards the assassins with that air of tranquillity and meekness, which never left him, he said to them. "My friends, there is apparently some mistake in this business; you certainly do not direct any attempt against a man, who, so far from having offended you, would willingly sacrifice his life to save you."*

These few words calmed in a moment, the rage with which these furious zealots were transported; they remained motionless for some time; then casting themselves at his feet, asked his pardon, and made the most solemn protestations, that no person should in future be more devoted to his service, or more disposed to follow him in

* Idem ibid.

all danger. Francis raised them up, pardoned them, embraced them with tenderness, and advised them to retire in order to avoid the researches of the governor, who would not shew them the same indulgence, should they fall into his hands. The attendants of Francis, who ascribed the apparent repentance of these wretches, to their inability to execute their atrocious design, in the presence of so many spectators, were unwilling that they should be dismissed on such easy terms ; they thought themselves in sufficient force to apprehend them, and insisted on conducting them to Allinges, that they might be placed in the hands of the governor. The servant of Francis was particularly animated on the occasion, and represented with much energy, that they would perpetually be exposed to similar attempts, were these ruffians suffered to pass unpunished ; but Francis employed all his authority to let them retire, and forbade his attendants to mention the adventure.

But on their arrival at Allinges, the servant thought himself not bound by this injunction, and related the whole transaction to the Baron of Hermance. The governor, on hearing the details of this dark attempt, supposed his authority would be at an end, if in the sight of his fortress,

and almost under his own eyes, he were to suffer such crimes to be committed with impunity ; he was therefore going to send out a detachment in pursuit of the assassins, with an order to bring them to Allinges alive or dead. But Francis, whose requests carried the force of commands, opposed this plan with so much energy, that he was obliged to overlook the transaction ; though, it must be owned, such conduct might have produced very fatal effects. One condition however was insisted on by the governor, and he was obliged to yield to it ; he was never to go to Thonon, or return from that place, without an escort. In vain did he try to evade this measure of preservation ; the Baron peremptorily required, that six men well armed, and commanded by a sergeant, should attend him on all occasions. This order was executed in opposition to the wishes of Francis ; but as he disliked such precautions, he found means in a short time to set them aside.

He proposed to the Baron his plan of settling at Thonon ; in support of which he observed, that it was the only means of avoiding the difficulty of daily walking two long leagues, and that often in tempestuous weather ; that the time spent on the road, might be more usefully employed ;

that the new converts ardently wished it; that by being continually on the spot, he might avail himself of many opportunities, which by his absence were entirely lost; that some of his new converts might die in the night; that it would be a perpetual subject of self condemnation, not to be ready to assist them, when they stood most in need of his services; that the day was not sufficient for those who presented themselves for instruction, and that many would be unwilling to visit him in open day, who would cheerfully repair to him in the concealment of the night.

However plausible the reasons of Francis might appear, the Baron of Hermance could not be induced to adopt his opinion. He represented to him the danger to which he must expose his person, by being shut up in Thonon during the night; that he would thus entrust himself to the disposal of the Calvinists, whose hatred for him was generally known; that if they had undertaken to assassinate him in open day, the darkness of night would increase their boldness; that the new Catholics were too weak to protect him, or if they undertook such a task, they would infallibly be overpowered by the superior numbers of their assailants, who would cheerfully embrace

this opportunity of inflicting vengeance ; that as the Duke of Savoy had taken him under his protection, any unpleasant event would commit the authority of his Sovereign ; that affairs might proceed to such a length, as to involve the ruin of Thonon ; that time would bring matters to a prosperous close, and that by proceeding with less haste, he might be enabled to form more permanent establishments. The Baron added many more political observations, drawn from the neighbourhood of Geneva and Switzerland ; the resentment of which countries the Duke was willing to avoid, and not by any means to draw their arms on his own territories.

But Francis, who in accepting the mission of Chablais, had abandoned his life to the care of Divine Providence, and who on all occasions was full of confidence in God, and in the effects of His all-powerful grace, promised to conduct matters, with such meekness and circumspection, as to obviate any of those events which excited the alarms of the governor. The Baron urged the point with some farther observations ; but at length, feeling the extreme difficulty of the journey every day to Thonon, and of his return to Allinges, consented that he should follow his plan ; he accordingly wrote again to the magis-

trates, rendering them responsible for any unpleasant event, that might take place.

* The Catholics received Francis with the greatest demonstrations of joy ; the respect, the esteem and confidence which they conceived for him, exceeded all bounds ; they considered him as a man of truly Apostolic spirit, full of grace and force, raised far above the views of human interest ; who had no object before him but the glory of God and their salvation. Francis on his side, supported his ministry, as St. Paul expresses it, in a manner worthy of God ; nothing escaped his charitable attention ; the days he devoted to instruction and spiritual conferences, to the visiting of the poor and of the sick ; and the nights he spent in study, in prayer, and in admitting sinners to reconciliation. His life supported his preaching ; and his discourses completed, what his good example had begun.

A method of life so truly Apostolic, was attended with that success, with which God had blessed the labours of the Apostles. Nothing bore such a resemblance to the Church in its infant state, as the congregation of Thonon ; the same charity for their brethren, the same zeal

* Anon. Book I.

for the faith, the same purity of manners appeared. For Francis accounted a bare abjuration of error of little consequence, if it were not followed by a perfect amendment of life; unless grace superabounded, where sin had appeared; unless the blessing, which Heaven annexed to his ministry, contributed at once to enlighten the mind, and subdue the heart. But nothing made a more lively impression on the minds of those Calvinists, who were not completely callous to all feeling, than the manner in which the poor and the sick were relieved. In this charitable work, Francis exhausted the whole of his supplies, after affording relief to others, often was he reduced to the want of common necessities; and in addition to these efforts of his own, he was perpetually soliciting his relations and friends to assist the poor Catholics of Chablais. Very considerable sums were frequently remitted to him, but they bore a small proportion to the extent of his charity. The Catholics seconded his zeal so far, as to be satisfied with necessities; and among them was observed a pious spirit of œconomy, which was directed to no other purpose, but the relief of the poor.

The splendor of so many virtues attracted daily to the Church some new proselyte; but it in-

creased the fury of the Calvinists. "What are we doing?" said they, as the Jews said of Christ: "Here is a man, who is insensibly gaining the esteem of the public; he is considered an Apostle, and we are daily declining in credit. Are we to wait, till he has brought us to beggary, and established Popery on the ruins of our Temples? If we suffer him to complete the work he has begun, the Duke of Savoy will come, and taking advantage of the small number to which we are reduced, will establish his authority on the ruin of our liberties, and involve us in the horrors of servitude."

Prejudice of the same interested nature, once gave birth to the attempts against the son of God. "It is better, said the Jews, that one man should die, than that the whole nation should be destroyed." The Calvinists of Thonon employed the same language with respect to Francis; the conclusion of their reasoning was, "let us be rid of him, and the sooner the better."

* In consequence of this deliberate resolution, as Francis agreeably to his practice, was spending a part of the night in prayer, he heard a confused

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

noise of arms, and the voices of several persons who were conversing in a low tone. He immediately supposed that the house was surrounded, that it was impossible to escape, and that his life was in danger. On this trying occasion, he imitated the conduct of our Redeemer, who, knowing that his hour was not come, eluded the fury of the Jews, by concealing himself, at the time, when he met the crowd, before the period designed by his heavenly Father had taken place.

* Francis had scarcely provided for his personal safety, when the door of the house was burst open, and the ruffians entered with violent clamours, seeking for their victim, but in vain. They therefore imagined that they had mistaken the moment, and that Francis was probably in some Catholic house, engaged in instruction, or imparting consolation to the sick. It was thought unsafe to remain long in the house, which they had forcibly entered; for however the magistrates might be disposed secretly to favour the dark attempt, they could not refuse, in compliance with their duty, to befriend Francis; the ruffians consequently judged it prudent to retire in haste. The holy missionary having

* Anon. Book I.

escaped so imminent a danger, never felt any diminution of zeal ; and the hazard, which he had encountered, served only to encrease his confidence in God.

In the mean time, the Baron of Hermance, informed of this fresh attempt, omitted no means to discover the authors, with a determined resolution to inflict exemplary punishment ; but as all those, who were able to give evidence, were accomplices in the deed, he never obtained any positive information. Francis on this occasion performed an act of the most heroic charity ; from the place, in which he was concealed, he recognised some of the actors in the desperate attempt ; and so far from discovering them, he spared no pains, to appease the Baron of Hermance, and to screen from public notice the authors of this horrid transaction.

* But these wretches, far from being moved by this unexampled generosity, took occasion from the event, to accuse him of witchcraft. They had heard, that he was in the house, at the time of their entrance, and they declared, that without the secret of rendering himself invisible,

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

it was beyond the power of man to effect an escape.* There was even an inhabitant of Thonon, who, without reflecting how strongly the evidence bore on himself, declared on oath, that he had seen him at a nocturnal meeting of sorcerers, and that he was there held in great estimation. It was thus that the Jews accused our Redeemer of expelling devils, in the name of Beelzebub their prince.

† Francis heard this horrid calumny with a smile; then making the sign of the cross, he said: "These are the charms, which I employ; it is by this sign I hope to conquer hell, and not by any secret understanding with the princes of darkness."

‡ But if the faith, with which Francis was animated, rendered him thus intrepid amidst the greatest dangers, his relations and friends experienced far different sensations. The reports, which had been spread throughout Savoy, that the Calvinists were determined to destroy him, and that whatever precautions of security might be taken, he would never escape assassination,

* Idem ibid.

† Anon. Book I.

‡ Aug. of Sales. Book II. Anon. ibid.

diffused a very general alarm. The President Favre, with the Bishop of Geneva, and particularly the Count of Sales, his father, wrote to him in the strongest terms, in order to engage him to leave Chablais, and return to Annecy, where full employment might be supplied to his zeal.

The Count renewed the remonstrances he had made, when his son took leave of him ; he represented in a striking light, the little success, which he had hitherto experienced ; the unavailing pains, he had taken ; and the dangers, to which he had been so often exposed, either from the violence, or brutality of the Calvinists. He assured him, that he knew them better than he ; that they were not only attached to their religion because they believed it good, but because they found it commodious ; and that they considered the Catholic religion, as a political engine to deprive them of the support of the neighbouring States, and to reduce them to slavery ; that as long as this prejudice, which it was not easy to eradicate, should prevail among them, no solid or permanent advantage, could be rationally expected from his labours ; that after all his toils, much was necessarily to be done, to perpetuate the Catholic religion, if he should be fortunate enough to re-establish it ; that churches must be raised,

proper persons procured to serve them ; pastors of learning and of irreproachable conduct, as well as colleges for the instruction of youth, must be found ; that if any of these resources should be wanting, his plan would fall to the ground. He then asked, at whose expence these churches and colleges were to be raised ; who was to furnish a proper support for the pastors and the instructors of youth ? He declared he had very strong doubts, whether the treasury of the Prince, exhausted as it was by the wars in which he had been engaged, could contribute to forward these objects ; that if a demand were made for that purpose on the people, it would be a direct method to engage them in revolt, and force them to abandon the Catholic religion, should they have embraced it. The Count inferred from these observations, that his best plan was to relinquish an undertaking, which presented such slender hopes of success, and which might eventually endanger his life ; and he finished his letter by repeating what he had before said to the Bishop of Geneva. " That he should esteem himself happy in having Saints in his family ; but that he wished them rather to be confessors, than martyrs."

Francis entertained very different sentiments ; the obstacles which lay before him, served only

to inflame his zeal. He was not one of those impetuous characters, that involve themselves in difficulties from a want of sober discretion ; on the other side, he was far removed from that inglorious timidity, which fancies dangers, when they have no existence ; which magnifies ordinary hazards, and is frightened from its purpose by the most trifling occurrences. It was not his purpose to set his enemies at defiance, nor to rouse their resentment ; but he never fled before them ; he even sought for the combat, when the cause of God and the duties of his ministry demanded his activity. The fear of death never prevented him from doing his duty ; proofs of this assertion have already been displayed to the reader ; and it will appear from the following part of this history, that martyrdom was wanting to crown his labours, rather than that he was deficient in the constancy of the martyr.

Agreeably to these sentiments, he wrote to the Count his father, and to his other friends, observing that common fame is a very unsafe voucher of fact ; that public reports had greatly exaggerated the dangers to which he was exposed, but that they had under-rated the success which God had been pleased to bestow on his labours ; that the former were by no means so great, as the public

voice had proclaimed, nor the number of Calvinists, who had been reconciled to the Church, so inconsiderable, as it had been supposed ; but that though the number were smaller, and God had made use of his ministry for the conversion of one soul only, he should consider his labour well bestowed ; that the merit of undertakings is not to be estimated by the rapid success, which may attend them ; that after three years of continual preaching, after the many miracles and signs, which the Redeemer of mankind had exhibited, he converted only about five hundred persons ; that the Church consisted not of a greater proportion after his resurrection ; that notwithstanding it was shortly after spread over the whole earth, and nations entered its pale in crowds ; that God demanded of his ministers labour only, and reserved the success of their endeavours to himself ; that Christ did not say to his Apostles : “ Go, convert the earth : ” but “ Go, preach, and teach all nations whatever I have taught you ; ” that he freely acknowledged that in the event of the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in Chablais, much must be done to support it ; but that all this was by no means so difficult, as it had been generally imagined ; that he had formed a plan for the purpose, and hoped in a short time to send it to the Duke of

Savoy, and to the Bishop of Geneva; that it was drawn up in such a manner, as not to be burdensome to the Prince, or to the people. Finally he remarked, that he was on the spot; that he was enabled to take a nearer survey of affairs, and that he entertained well grounded hopes, that the Almighty would bless his endeavours in a signal manner.

Indeed the report of the intended assassination of Francis, of which we have spoken, was soon circulated in every quarter, and produced in minds least subject to prejudice, all the effects which might be expected. It was generally observed without any disguise, that if the ministers felt themselves able to reply to Francis, they never would have adopted such violent measures; that to have recourse to assassination, under such circumstances, was an evident proof of their distrust in their cause, and of their inability to defend it; that it was a singular event, that at the gates of Geneva, the centre of Calvinism, a single man should attack all the ministers, without any attempt on their part to defend the common cause; that if Francis taught error, he should be confuted, and that the ministers laboured under a gross mistake, if they thought they should be

believed on their word, when their conduct exhibited so many reasons for distrust.

After such bitter reproaches, it was universally supposed, that these ministers of Calvinism, would be constrained to state the merits of their cause in a conference ; and that they would call in the assistance of their friends, rather than preserve so long an uninterrupted silence, that proved so injurious to their reputation, and so fatal to the stability of their religion, which it was so much their interest to maintain. But it is more easy to accuse the Catholic Church of teaching error, than to prove such an assertion. The time was now passed, when her pastors were too ignorant, or too weak to defend her cause ; and it appeared as dangerous an experiment to contend with a man of the enlightened mind, and of the exemplary character of Francis, as it had been before easy and practicable to seduce people, conducted by pastors of irregular conduct, of timid and selfish dispositions, who, so far from possessing knowledge sufficient to refute the daily calumnies, with which the Church was aspersed, were scarcely acquainted with the first elements of the Catholic doctrine. Nothing is more easy, than to vanquish an enemy, who stands not on

his own defence; the Catholic religion in those parts, weakened and dispirited, had sunk under the efforts of its enemies; to this disposition only, had Calvinism been indebted for its success. No other proof of this can be required than the transactions at Thonon, which took place even at the gates of Geneva. Francis alone appears to justify the Catholic Church;* her enemies retire before him.

However disgraceful it might appear, not to offer any thing in reply, when the occasion demanded a defence, and not to assume even the appearances of right, the ministers persisted in an obstinate silence; they were satisfied with declaiming in their sermons against the Catholic doctrine, and its champion; but when a conference was proposed, or a regular discussion to be adjusted, no one came forward, and fresh pretexts were ingeniously framed to decline the contest. In the mean time the evil gained ground, and it became necessary to apply a remedy in order to check its progress; they accordingly issued a very strict prohibition to hear Francis, or to have any sort of communication with him.

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

* But this prohibition had no other effect, than to increase the curiosity of the people, who went in crowds to his sermons. He himself, in a letter which he wrote about this time to his brother Lewis of Sales, relates, that some remaining hindrance, arising from political considerations, which probably would not long exist, had prevented the Baron of Awlly, a man of rank, talents, and distinguished merit, and in high estimation among the Calvinists, from appearing publicly at his instructions with the magistrates of the town ; that the most eminent persons of the party no longer concealed their eagerness to receive information on the contested points ; that they had been much struck at one of his sermons on the real presence ; and that those who durst not appear openly, had heard him from some secret place.

† Such is the account, which the humility of Francis permitted him to give to his brother, from whom he was unable to conceal the secrets of his heart. But we are informed by the historians of his life, that he preached on the real presence with so much energy, that a confused

* Anon. Book I.

† Idem ibid.

murmur arose from his audience, as from persons, who were overpowered by the force of truth, and that this sermon converted six hundred people.

* This success filled the consistory with alarm, as it was apprehended that farther consequences would ensue, unless means were devised to impede his progress. Various expedients were therefore proposed to adjust differences; some were of opinion, that a confession of faith should be given by both parties in writing, and that an assembly should be held to confer on its contents without animosity, and without dissimulation.† Others desired, that the minister Viret, who enjoyed a great reputation among his party, might be commissioned to confer alone with Francis: and others wished that more of the ministers might be associated with him in the conference.

But these different plans were attended with considerable difficulties in the execution. As to the first, which regarded the confession of faith, it presupposed that the party fully agreed on doctrinal matters; a supposition by no means ad-

* Ibid.

† Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

missible, as it clearly appears from the differences, which have invariably arisen among the Calvinists themselves. The opinion of those, who wished the minister Viret, to meet Francis, was subject to much inconvenience. It was soon discovered to be a dangerous expedient, to entrust the cause to the abilities of one man; Francis, it was remarked, possessed great skill, was habituated to controversial discussion, had full command of himself, and never lost sight of his subject; the advantage therefore would be too much in his favour. Nothing then remained, but to adopt the third proposition. But to that it was objected, that it would confer too distinguished an honour on Francis of Sales; that it would excite an impression of his consequence and of their fears; that he had already attained too high a reputation, without increasing it by the solemnity of such a discussion, as would make a considerable noise in the world, in proportion to the numbers, who would crowd to the conference.

It is an unusual event to see assemblies, composed of persons possessing equal authority, agree in any measure; whether it be, that each one on those occasions is eager to maintain his own sentiment, and believes it disgraceful to yield to the opinion of others; or that the greatest part

of mankind are better qualified to raise difficulties, than to solve them,

This observation was extremely applicable to the consistory of Thonon; many difficulties were started, and many expedients proposed, but no agreement took place.* Francis himself relates, in the letter to Lewis of Sales already referred to, that the ministers were extremely embarrassed on his account; that he had reduced them to the necessity of meeting him in a conference, but that they were unable to adopt any settled resolution on the subject. Their embarrassment increased, when Francis, who knew their perplexity, and was determined to turn it to his own advantage, pressed them in several public writings, to agree to a conference, as a mode indispensably necessary to terminate their differences, and to remove the scandal, which their silence had occasioned in the minds of the people.

† A challenge so public could not pass without observation, and it was already become too dangerous any longer to disappoint the expecta-

* Anon. Book I.

† Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

tions of the Catholics and of the Calvinists, by declining the combat. A conference was therefore accepted, the day and the place appointed, and the subjects of discussion adjusted, with every particular, that could ensure success to the undertaking.

* The report of this intended conference was no sooner spread, than numbers from Geneva, from the neighbouring towns, and from all Chablais, crowded to Thonon to witness the scene. Francis appeared first at the appointed place ; it was expected that the ministers would not fail to attend, and the Calvinists already had proclaimed a victory. But their surprise was great, when the ministers, instead of appearing agreeably to the appointment, sent an apology, on the plea, that the permission of the Duke of Savoy had not been obtained to hold the assembly.† This apparent respect for the authority of their sovereign, which it was known they had not observed in much more delicate conjunctures, did not satisfy either party. It was remarked in very intelligible language, that such an inconvenience might have been easily foreseen, and as easily

* Anon. Book I.

† Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

obviated; that there was no reason to doubt, that the Duke of Savoy, by whose orders Francis was known to have entered Chablais, would approve whatever he should judge prudent in the business of the ministry; that he never would have appeared first at the conference, had he not been well assured, that he was doing nothing, which by any construction could be displeasing to his prince, or could injure his authority; and that the excuse of the ministers was a complete defeat, injurious to the religion and to the faction of the Calvinists.

* As this pretext, flimsy as it was, might bear a plausible appearance, Francis received it with the politest attention, and informed the ministers that he would take the business upon himself, obtain the permission of the Duke of Savoy, and procure his approbation of all that might be done.† The ministers replied, that this assurance was insufficient, and that in affairs, which might involve the authority of the sovereign, too much precaution could not be taken. Francis replied to this second excuse, that before the approbation of the Duke should arrive, they might be

* Ibid.

† Anon. Book I.

satisfied with the provisional leave of the **Baron** of Hermance, the governor of the Province, to whom this prince had given all necessary powers in matters which regarded religion, and that he would undertake to obtain his consent.

There now appeared no means of retreating ; and it was generally supposed, that the ministers would proceed to the conference. However, as they were fully determined not to commence the contest with Francis, in open defiance of the public opinion on such disingenuous conduct, and leaving appearances on the side of the Catholics, they replied, that they acknowledged the authority of the **Baron** of Hermance only in affairs of a civil nature, but that to hold an assembly for religious purposes, the authority of the sovereign was indispensably requisite ; that if matters did not terminate agreeably to his wishes, he might disavow the leave of the governor, and the assembly might be charged with violating the authority of the sovereign.

This conduct, so strongly marked with insincerity and with distrust of the merits of Calvinism, could not fail to confirm the Catholics in their faith, and singularly to scandalise their

adversaries. This impression proceeded so far, that even one of the ministers, ashamed of the disingenuous behaviour of his brethren, repaired privately to Francis, and told him, that agreeably to his engagement, he desired to confer with him on the subject of religion.* This conference had not the solemnity, and did not excite the attention, which would have accompanied the proposed assembly; but as both parties acted with sincerity, the success was such, as probably would not have been the result of the great discussion.

The method which Francis followed on this occasion, was the same, which had before succeeded, and had extremely perplexed the ministers. He brought him with whom he conferred, to an acknowledgment, that without paying any regard to subjects which they considered indifferent, it was necessary to attend to the fundamental points, which they had made the ground of their separation, and had openly declared to be the true motive of their rupture with the Catholic Church. When this point was ascertained, it was easy to come to an agreement on two others; the first of which was, that Catholics

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II. Anon. Book I.

are not to be charged with the consequences of those doctrines, which they disavow ; the other was, that the belief of the Church, is not to be collected from the writings of private doctors, but from the genuine sources ; such as the council of Trent, which met for the purpose of composing differences on the subject of religion, and which can never be charged with ignorance or disingenuity in expounding the Catholic doctrine.

The minister considered these three points perfectly admissible ; certain consequences he afterwards discovered, inevitably to follow. In fact, Francis so clearly demonstrated to him that the belief of the Church had been misrepresented, her doctrine disfigured, opinions ascribed to her which she never held, and that such consequences had been drawn from her doctrine as she disclaimed ; finally he shewed in so evident a manner, that the Church, when her tenets are understood, teaches nothing but what is salutary and orthodox, that the minister found himself constrained to yield.*

His conversion could not remain so secret as to be concealed from the party. They felt that

* Ibid.

such an event might produce very singular consequences, unless an expeditious remedy were applied. The influence of his relatives and friends was employed to engage him to return to the communion, which he had relinquished; promises and menaces were alternately resorted to without effect.* He was at length confined to prison; false witnesses were suborned; crimes were laid to his charge, which he had never committed, and every method was used by turns, to flatter his hopes, and to excite his fears. As this minister was a man of known probity, it was supposed that the affair would proceed no farther; but this occasion displayed a remarkable instance, on one hand of the effects of false zeal, and on the other of the force of divine grace in a heart, which was influenced in its conversion by no human interest. Injustice was carried to the utmost extremity.† The minister was condemned to death; and the sentence was executed with so much precipitation, that Francis had not time to resort to the authority of the prince, as he had designed.‡

This violent proceeding excited horror in the breasts of the Catholics and of the Calvinists;

* Ibid. † Ibid.

‡ Aug. of Sales. Book II.

and produced an effect very opposite to the intention of the actors, which was to prevent farther conversions. The advocate Poncet, a man of distinguished reputation, both at Geneva and in Chablais, and the Baron of Awilly, who has been mentioned, were indignant, that the party after rejecting measures of conciliation, should recur to such methods, in order to support their religion ; they began to entertain strong suspicions concerning Calvinism, and were led to believe, that a creed, propagated by violence and by means wholly human, might have owed its birth to similar causes. On the other hand, the Apostolic conduct of Francis, far remote from the suspicion of interested views, his incomparable meekness, extremely distant from any thing that could exhibit a shadow of violence, his piety, his charity, his patience, his indefatigable zeal for the salvation of souls which nothing could subdue, were powerful and efficacious inducements, furnished by God, to engage them to return to the bosom of the Catholic Church. But the prejudices which they had inherited, the commodious nature of a religion, which flattered the senses, in the same proportion, in which the Catholic Church requires her children to contend with sensuality; the shame with which they were filled at the thought of changing their religion; the appre-

hension of what might be said on such a delicate subject, and of the enemies they might create by such a step ; finally, the loss of credit and of the authority which they had acquired in a great party, that predominated in the province, formed so many ties that held them enslaved to error, and prevented them from following the lights of their conscience.*

The advocate Poncet was the first, who surmounted these difficulties ; he waited on Francis, and conferred with him a considerable time ; and it may be said with truth, that he did not yield in the contest, till he found the post completely untenable. He wished however that his conversion should remain secret ; and he required in express terms, that two persons only should witness the abjuration of his errors. But Francis who foresaw the advantageous consequences likely to arise from the conversion of a man of his character, after yielding to him in the last point, represented to him in terms extremely strong, that in the business of salvation, no artificial precautions should be taken ; that it must be a false shame, that could prevent him from publicly acknowledging the grace, with which he

* Ibid.

had been favoured ; that Christ wanted not those concealed followers, who were destitute of courage sufficient to make a public profession of his doctrine ; and that he would not recognise those as his own, before his heavenly Father, who should be prevented by human interest from confessing him before men. These forcible representations induced him to make an open profession of the Catholic faith.

His example was followed by the conversion of a great number of persons of every condition ; but no event excited a stronger sensation, than the change of the Baron of Awilly. He was at the head of the Calvinists in Chablais ; and in that station, he had acquired, by his great qualities, a high reputation at Geneva, and in the neighbouring parts. He had married a Catholic lady of illustrious birth, but more distinguished by her virtue. Her enchanting temper, her meekness, her charity, and piety, were the first attractions, which God employed to draw the husband from those errors, in which his birth, more than his choice, had involved him. This affectionate man, never could be induced to believe, that God, whose mercies are infinite towards the most abandoned sinners, had consigned a person so virtuous to illusion and error. With

this impression on his mind, he endeavoured with the mildest insinuation and address, to engage her to embrace the Calvinistic creed; but the lady, who had enjoyed the advantage of being instructed by Francis of Sales, discovered so much firmness in her faith, that he promised to give her no farther trouble. After gaining this point, she advanced a step farther, and induced him to go and hear Francis, who was preaching the lent at Thonon. They repaired thither in company; and Francis, who had been apprised of the circumstance, preached with such energy on the marks of the true Church, as made a sensible impression on the mind of the Baron. About the same time, the execution of the minister, of whom we have spoken, took place, to the scandal of both parties. The Baron of Awlly, who was an upright character, publicly testified his disapprobation of the proceeding; he heard it justified on the most flimsy grounds; and from that moment he completely lost the esteem, which he had entertained for the ministers.

But much still remained to be done; Awlly was a man of talents; he had been hitherto a sincere Calvinist. The disgraceful conduct of the ministers, in declining the conference with Francis, had excited his suspicions; their violence towards

the converted minister, had increased his distrust. But as he thought it not just, to decide on the merit of a religion, by the irregular conduct of its ministers, or its professors, he kept his mind in a species of neutrality, which prevented him from declaring in favour of one side, to the prejudice of the other. His intercourse with Francis, drew him from this dangerous situation, and excited his partiality to the Catholic religion. His virtuous consort seconded the attention of this Apostolic man, by alms, by fervent prayers, and by the continual tears, which she shed in the presence of God, for the conversion of her husband. The Father of mercies was at length moved; He heard the ardent supplications of this virtuous lady; the Baron perceived that himself, and not she was engaged in illusion and error; and the infidel husband, as St. Paul expresses it, was sanctified by the faithful wife.

The conversion of this man engrossed the attention of Francis considerably more than any similar business. As the step, which Awlly was about to take, was of the utmost consequence, and likely to excite the most lively sensation, he was willing to leave no subject of reproach. He frequently conversed with Francis; he committed to writing his doubts and the answers; he afterwards

examined them with all the attention of a man, who is afraid of deception in the most important of all concerns.* All this did not satisfy his mind; and feeling himself unable to confer with his instructor at Thonon, with the freedom and secrecy he could wish, he would meet him by appointment in a forest, about a league from the town; thither they both repaired often in the week, and discussed with the utmost liberty, all the points contested between the Catholics and the Calvinists. Awlly feeling himself at length ready to yield to conviction, devised another precaution, which might screen him from the reproaches that might be made, for trusting to his own judgment, in the important choice of a religion, in which he designed to live and to die. He proposed to Francis to commit to writing the leading points of their conversations, and to send them to Geneva and to Berne, to see what the most celebrated ministers in those towns would produce in reply. Francis assured him, that it was never his intention to deceive, or to take by surprise any human being; that he approved of the proposition, but could engage either that they would give no answer, or at least that they

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II. Anon. Book I.

could produce nothing that would invalidate his reasons; and he entreated him in his turn, after this last effort, to make without delay, a public profession of the Catholic faith. The Baron agreed to this proposal.* The substance of their conferences was therefore compiled, and sent to the ministers of Geneva and of Berne.

The prediction of Francis was verified. Awlly received no answer; he considered their silence a manifest acknowledgment of their inability to produce a reply, and lamenting their obstinacy and blindness, he abandoned the schism, and was received a member of the Catholic Church.

The circumstances attending this conversion, were to Francis, an ample compensation for the trouble, which he had taken in the whole business.† Awlly, who did nothing by halves, was desirous that the day, on which his abjuration was to be made, should be known over the whole country, and even at Geneva; he accordingly invited an immense number of persons to attend. On the day appointed for the ceremony, he publicly declared the motives of his conversion, and exhorted the attendants to follow his example, and

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

† Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II. Anon. Book I.

to prove themselves worthy of the grace, which God had imparted to him. He abjured the errors of Calvin, and was admitted to the Catholic communion in presence of the people of Thonon, and a great concourse of Calvinists from Geneva, who had come on purpose to witness a transaction, which without the testimony of their own senses, they never could have been induced to believe.

A conversion so publicly attested, filled the Catholics with joy, and heightened the confusion of the Calvinists. The event was followed with the change of so many others, that Francis, unequal to the increase of labour, was obliged to call in farther aid. About this time a circumstance took place, which completely destroyed the small share of credit, that remained to the ministers. The affairs of Awilly frequently obliged him to repair to Geneva. As he gloried in his conversion, and was besides a man of too much influence to apprehend any insult, he appeared in public, and spoke with as much liberty as he had ever shewn before his change; the high estimation in which he was held, prevented any remarks on the freedom of his deportment.* A

* Charles Aug. of Sales, Book II.

minister, of the name of La Faye, who had formerly enjoyed a considerable share of his esteem, ventured to remonstrate. Awlly replied, that he had resorted to that expedient too late; and observed, that he should have given an answer to the performance, which had been sent to the ministers of Geneva and of Berne; that both he and his brethren had shewn extreme cowardice, in refusing to defend their religion against a solitary opponent, Francis of Sales, who had so often given them a public challenge. The minister, roused by these observations, declared himself ready to go to Thonon, and to enter the lists with Francis; he expressed the strongest assurance of converting him in the presence of the Baron, who, he alleged, must have been deceived by a false exposition of the Catholic faith, which was assuredly different from the artificial turns and singular explanations supplied by Francis.

The Baron accepted the proposal; the day was fixed for the minister's appearance at Thonon; and Awlly informed Francis, that he was now to meet an antagonist, worthy of himself. Francis expressed himself pleased with the proposition, and assured his friend, that he would be punctual to the appointment; but he had some

difficulty in believing; that, after the ministers of Thonon had refused to confer with him, those of Geneva would engage in the business.* Accordingly La Faye failed in his engagement; and though Awlly went to Geneva three or four different times to enforce his appearance, fresh pretexts were always employed to decline the projected contest.

Nothing could be better calculated than this obstinate refusal to confirm Awlly in the faith, which he had embraced; but as he was not a man easily disposed to drop a favourite project, he proposed to Francis to go to Geneva, in order to solicit the minister to engage in the intended discussion. Francis replied, that such a plan appeared to him rather of too delicate a nature; that his mission did not extend to Geneva, a city not subject to the Duke of Savoy; that it was confined to Chablais and the three bailiwicks; that such a conference conducted without order and without witnesses, might lead the ministers to claim the victory, however unfavourable the issue might prove to themselves; that if any insult should be offered to him, or any outrage committed, he might justly be charged with

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

having drawn it on himself by his own imprudence ; that he well knew the people of Geneva to be prone to sedition, and so completely hostile to the Catholic religion, as not to endure the smallest vestige of it ; and that they would consider it as a serious insult that their pastors should be attacked within the precincts of their walls.

Awlly replied, that these consequences might be apprehended, if the proposed discussion were to be held with a formal solemnity, or if any preconcerted design should appear ; that he only requested his revered friend to pay the minister La Faye a visit of civility ; that he himself would gradually introduce the discussion ; that he would be responsible for the consequences, and that he had credit and friends enough at Geneva to prevent the possibility of any insult.

As Francis desired nothing with so much ardour, as to confirm Awlly in his faith ; and as he apprehended, that by persisting in his refusal, he might give birth to a similar impression made by the minister's conduct, and that it might prove unfavourable to the interests of religion, he acceded to the proposal. * They accordingly pro-

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

ceeded to Geneva, accompanied by some friends of the Baron, who might in the case of need, bear witness to all that should pass at the intended meeting.

No words can express the surprise of the minister, when he saw before him, the celebrated Francis of Sales, who was in reality more formidable, than his appearance seemed to indicate. The conference lasted three hours, and notwithstanding all the efforts of Francis to confine the minister to one question before he proceeded to another, as it was evidently his advantage to examine nothing to the bottom, he agitated so many different points, that nothing was thoroughly discussed. The conversation turned on the unity of the Church, on the sacrament of the Eucharist, on good works, on satisfaction, on purgatory, on the intercession and the invocation of the saints, and on some other controverted points; subjects so extensive, as to be sufficient for a discussion of many days. But it was necessary to follow the minister in his course, who, feeling himself closely pursued on one point, passed immediately to another, but with such disadvantage, that having remarked in the countenances of the attendants, the small degree of satisfaction afforded by his answers, he broke off the conference, by pouring

forth a torrent of the most atrocious invectives against Francis of Sales.

Those who were present, felt the utmost indignation at the insolence of the minister; and suggested to Francis some sharp sallies, to which such conduct naturally gave birth. But he observed with his usual meekness, that if his adversary had any good reasons to produce, he would not have recourse to insults; that a person, who is in danger of sinking in the water, naturally catches at what he can lay hold of; and that for his own part he had never given to any one a severe reply, without repenting of his conduct.

It is easy to form an estimate of the advantage of this conference to Francis, and to the Catholic Church, by the subsequent proceeding of the Baron of Awlly.* He composed a work, in which he gave an account of the motives of his conversion, and printed the performance at Lyons. He there speaks too advantageously of Francis of Sales, to leave any room to suppose, that he considered him as a man, by whom he had been deceived, or who had ill explained the Catholic doctrine: This however must inevitably

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

have happened, if Francis had suffered any disadvantage in the conference, which we have recorded, or rather, if he had not gained a complete victory.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

THE LIFE

OF

Saint Francis of Sales.

BOOK III.

C O N T E N T S

OF THE

THIRD BOOK.

THE unparalleled success of St. Francis of Sales in Chablais, attracts letters of congratulation from all quarters....The President Favre, writes to him in the name of the Duke of Savoy....The Pope's Nuncio, and his Holiness himself perform the same friendly office....Death of the Baron of Hermance....He is succeeded by Jerom de Lambect; who, by no means displays the great qualities of his predecessor. This circumstance gives great embarrassment to Francis of Sales....He receives an order from the Duke of Savoy to repair to Turin, in order to confer with him on the affairs of Chablais; at the same time, a brief arrives from the Pope, who directs him to proceed to Geneva, to have a conference with Theodore Beza....He prefers the journey to Turin, believing it more advantageous to the Catholic religion....He crosses the Alps in

the greatest severity of the winter with imminent danger of his life....Public and private conferences, which he holds with the Duke of Savoy....He persuades him to re-establish the Catholic religion in all his dominions....Great obstacles to be surmounted, in order to carry this design into execution....Zealous and disinterested conduct, which he displays on this occasion....He repasses the Alps, and goes to Thonon in a very inclement season....He communicates the orders of the Duke of Savoy, for the re-establishment of the Catholic religion, to the syndics and other magistrates of Thonon....The town is in commotion, and recourse is had to arms....Great danger, to which St. Francis is exposed....He succeeds in calming the sedition by his firmness, and re-establishes the Catholic worship at Thonon and in Chablais....He gives the Duke of Savoy, an account of what had passed on this occasion....The Duke enraged at the inhabitants of Thonon, sends the regiment of Count Mortinengue, to inflict punishment....St. Francis of Sales opposes this measure, and prevents any severity towards the people....He proceeds to Geneva, agreeably to the order of his Holiness, to confer with Theodore Beza....Remarkable interview with that reformer, but without success....He gives an account of it to the Pope, who directs him to return to Geneva, and to make in his name very advantageous offers to Beza....St. Francis of Sales has two other conferences with him, on the subject of his conversion, but without effect....The Bishop of Geneva repairs to Thonon, with a great number of missionaries....The Duke of Savoy arrives there, a short time after, to countenance by his presence, the re-establishment of the Catholic religion....The Cardinal Medici, the Pope's legate, reaches Thonon about the same time....Great examples of piety, given by the Duke and the legate....Esteem of both for St. Francis of Sales....

Departure of the legate....Arrival of ambassadors from Switzerland and Geneva, to oppose the re-establishment of the Catholic religion....Incidents on that occasion.... Noble action of the Duke of Savoy....All Chablais is re-united to the Catholic church....Measures which the Duke concert with Francis for the preservation of the Catholic religion.

THE LIFE
OF
SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES,
BISHOP AND PRINCE
OF GENEVA.

BOOK THE THIRD.

THE fame of the unexampled success of Francis, and of the advantages, which he had gained over the Calvinists, was soon spread through Savoy; it passed the Alps, and was carried to Rome; the Duke of Savoy and the Pope received the intelligence about the same time. The more this apostolic man laboured to conceal from himself the view of his achievements, and to refer all the glory to the Father of lights, to the author of all good, from whom arise, as from an abundant source, all those gifts which men admire without adverting to the cause; the more was God, whom he served from such pure motives, pleased to display the glory of his faithful servant, who studied His interests. His zeal, his firmness, his meekness, his talents,

his insinuating address, his constancy in his apostolic career were loudly and generally extolled.* These circumstances, drew from all parts, letters of congratulation. The Bishop of Geneva, to whom he had given a regular account of what had taken place in Chablais, and without whose advise, he had undertaken nothing, was the first to write. His letters were followed by those from the President Favre, who congratulated with him in his own name, and in that of the Duke of Savoy. The Baron of Hermance, the celebrated father Possevinus, the Archbishop of Bari, the Pope's Nuncio at Turin, shewed the same attention. The President Favre, proceeded still farther; for it was at that period, that he dedicated to Francis his twelfth book of Conjectures on the Civil Law. Nothing can exceed the praises which he bestows on him in his dedicatory epistle; and these encomiums reflect distinguished honour on Francis, as his merit alone attracted them, and the great man from whom they proceeded, was known not to be profuse of commendation. Besides all these eminent personages, the Pope himself, wrote to him a letter, full of esteem, in which he exhorts him to continue his apostolic labours, and to

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

complete the conversion of Chablais, which he had so happily begun.

But nothing afforded him more pleasure than the brief which his Holiness sent to him for the Baron of Awilly. From this communication we learn, how great a share the wife of the Baron had in the conversion of her husband. We likewise see the great estimation, in which this nobleman was held by the Duke of Savoy, and the whole country; for, Clement, after presenting to him his congratulations on his happy return to the Catholic Church, exhorts him to protect the rising Church of Chablais, and to imitate the apostle of the Gentiles, who, after having been one of the most ardent persecutors of the Faith, became by his faithful correspondence with grace, one of its most zealous defenders.

Nothing can be more seductive, than the charms of praise; and whatever share of modesty may be externally displayed, the weakness of our nature is such, as to induce us too frequently to yield to the dangerous temptation of ascribing to ourselves, a part of that, which belongs exclusively to God. Francis was altogether free from this failing; and the manner, in which he received the above-mentioned letters, places this

assertion beyond a doubt. To some of his admirers he replied, in the language of the apostle, that having nothing, which we have not received from God, we have no right to glory in ourselves ; to others he observed, that he who plants or he who waters is not to be considered ; but that success is wholly to be ascribed to God, who gives the increase ; that it is vain for men to speak to the senses, unless God speak to the heart ; and that he who made all things out of nothing, could easily perform wonders with the vilest instruments. His conduct fully corresponded with these sentiments. He could not endure that more than usual deference should be paid to himself ; he was not less accessible, or less familiar with the poor ; the most splendid employments he left to others, while he reserved for himself, whatever was mean and laborious. His meekness and patience, instead of experiencing any diminution, seemed daily to increase ; never did he avail himself of the advantages of his noble birth, of the credit he enjoyed, or of the esteem and confidence of his sovereign ; he received affronts without resentment, and appeared insensible to any other objects, but the interest of God and of his Church.

He thus continued his mission with the most complete success ; but no situation, however for-

tunate, is at all times exempt from unforeseen accidents.* The Baron of Hermance, that experienced man, who had been distinguished by his zeal for the Catholic religion, was about this time seized with a malady, which in a few days hurried him to the grave, at a period, when his prudence and authority were most wanted. He loved Francis with all the ardour of friendship, and honoured him as a father ; on all occasions he shewed himself ready to second his designs ; and by his credit in the province, he was enabled to bring the most difficult affairs to a fortunate issue. Francis attended him in his illness, and was present at his death ; and it may fairly be considered as a reward of the singular virtue of this nobleman, that he was permitted to enjoy the friendship of so holy a man, and to expire in his arms.

His loss was a subject of extraordinary regret, as no resemblance of him could be traced in the character of his successor. This was Jerom Lambert, a man of merit, but by no means possessed of the great qualities of the Baron of Hermance. He was severe in his manner, conducted business with an air of haughtiness, and

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

under pretence of establishing the authority of his sovereign, he gave general dissatisfaction, and incurred hatred in the same proportion, in which his predecessor had excited love.* Francis, on all occasions easy and accommodating, suffered much from this governor without complaint. The latter was by no means deficient in respect for the pious missionary; the powerful recommendation of the Duke of Savoy prevented such an occurrence; but his severe and arbitrary manner was not in unison with the extreme mildness of Francis; who, on many occasions, rather wished that affairs should be left undone, than conducted in such a manner as to excite the aversion of the people.

It was for this reason, that Francis, not yet venturing to say mass at Thonon, went every day to celebrate the divine mysteries in a chapel at some distance from that town. The winter was uncommonly severe; and a torrent, which he had to pass, was swollen by the melting of the snow, and had carried away the bridges by the rapidity of its course.† He however crossed this dangerous passage daily, and returned in

* Ibid.

† Anon. Book I. Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

the same manner, on a plank covered with ice, sliding on his hands and knees at the hazard of his life. The imminent danger, to which he was exposed, alarmed all who witnessed it; but nothing could check the zeal of this apostolic man; he found such consolation and strength in partaking of the bread of the strong, that far greater dangers would not have stopped his career. With sensible delight he always acknowledged, that he had promoted the conversion of Chablais more effectually by fervent and continual prayer, than by all the talents which it had pleased the Almighty to bestow. "The Apostles," would he say, "always united prayer with preaching; and the people of God subdued their enemies, not less by the prayers of Moses, than by the valour of Josue. It is a gross mistake to imagine, that people are to be converted by any other means, than those which Christ and the Apostles employed; a change of heart can proceed only from God, and such a favour cannot be solicited with too much importunity."

The Baron of Hermance, alarmed at the danger, which he daily experienced, of falling into a rapid current, that would have carried him away, without the possibility of any assistance, had some time before his death, concerted

with considerable address, a method of introducing the celebration of the divine mysteries at Thonon; he would apparently have compassed his object without violence, and even with the consent of those, who were most interested in preventing such a plan. But his successor possessed neither his prudence, nor his credit; and Francis chose rather daily to expose his life to danger, than to witness the ruin of an undertaking, by a conduct different from what he had hitherto held.

In the mean time, his success daily increased; and the Duke of Savoy, who felt a considerable interest in the conversion of Chablais, considered it expedient to confer with him on the subject. He accordingly wrote to him a letter full of esteem and gratitude, and annexed an express order to him to repair without delay to Turin, for the purpose of concerting means of forwarding the work, which he had so happily begun, and which was so interesting both to the Church and to the State.

Francis, who was persuaded that this Prince had not sufficiently consulted his own interest in this business, thinking that the co-operation of sovereign authority, skilfully applied, might be

attended with the best effects, returned thanks to God for having opened his eyes, and moved his heart. He was preparing to comply with this requisition, when the father Esprit de Baumes, a capuchin preacher, arrived at Thonon; he was the bearer of a brief addressed by his Holiness to Francis, and was entrusted with an important negotiation, which was to be proposed to the holy missionary in the name of the Pontiff. This brief, dated the first of October, in the year one thousand five hundred and ninety six, was an introductory letter, in which the Pope, after testifying his esteem of his prudence and talents, and expressing his confidence in his zeal for the holy see, referred him to the father Esprit, who had to propose to him a delicate negotiation, which it had been thought advisable to confide to his management, as he was judged capable of conducting it with every prospect of success. Francis therefore applied to the father Esprit, to know the pleasure of his Holiness; and was informed, that the Pope, desired him to procure an interview with Theodore Beza; to spare no pains, in order to induce him to return to the Catholic Church; and if this could be accomplished, to offer him in the name of his Holiness, all the advantages, he could wish, with the exception of ecclesias-

tical dignities, which were not to be proffered; and to promise every security and safeguard, he might be disposed to demand.

It is universally known, that Beza was the most celebrated minister of the Calvinistic party. During the life of Calvin, he had shared his authority, and after his death, the whole weight of it devolved to him by succession. He was beyond all doubt a man of an elegant turn of mind, and in this respect inferior to none of his contemporaries; he spoke and wrote both in prose and verse, with extreme delicacy and politeness; and if he was surpassed by Calvin in learning, he excelled him in so many particulars, that he often excited the jealousy of that reformer. The Calvinists considered him as a man of extraordinary merit; he had attained among his party the summit of reputation. He was at this time advanced in years, but had not lost any share of that good humour, by which he was distinguished; the mildness of his manners, and the charms of his conversation, had procured him so great a number of friends, that he was at once respected and loved by the whole sect. He had for a considerable time professed the Catholic religion, in which he was born; and possibly this circumstance induced the Pope to

Imagine, that his return might be accomplished without difficulty.

The historians, who have been consulted on this subject, assign no other reason. But it is not altogether probable, that a pontiff possessed of the talents and discernment of Clement the VIII, would have relied upon so feeble a conjecture, and would have issued, on such a ground, an express order, to commence the work of his conversion. Whatever were the motives of this commission, no event could reflect greater credit on Francis; and no proof more demonstrative can be given of the high reputation, which Francis enjoyed at the Court of Rome, the most enlightened in Europe, and in which the merit of men is appreciated with superior exactness.

These two contradictory orders, the first from the Pope, who directed him to repair to Geneva, the second from the Duke of Savoy, who summoned him to Turin, proved extremely embarrassing to Francis. The father Esprit was of opinion, that the order of his Holiness should be first carried into execution. He remarked on that subject, that the season was extremely unfavourable to a journey over the Alps, that he himself had been in danger of perishing by cold;

that the roads had become impassable from the unusual fall of snow that year ; that the approaching month of December would render them still more impervious, and that the Duke of Savoy could not but admit so fair an excuse ; that the same reason was not applicable to his journey to Geneva, which was in the neighbourhood, and perfectly accessible by a most excellent road along the side of the lake. He observed, that the Pope, whose penetration was uncommon, had assuredly good reasons to issue such positive orders to undertake the conversion of Beza ; that there are favourable conjunctures, which are ruined by delay ; that unless the proper moment be embraced, a great work often miscarries ; that Beza was old, and might die during his absence at Turin, and that his death would occasion the loss of a great example, which might contribute to the conversion of thousands ; that though nothing might happen to him in the interval, the will of man is variable, and that he was perhaps in such dispositions, as would not afterwards be discovered, if any delay intervened.

A person less zealous than Francis would instantly have yielded to the reasons of the father Esprit. That religious man had not travelled with the greatest expedition ; and from the time

of his departure from Rome, the season had proved so excessively inclement, that a journey over the Alps could not be undertaken without the most imminent danger. Besides the arguments of the father Esprit were extremely cogent; and it could not be denied, that, if Beza could be induced to return to the Catholic Church, such an event might be attended with consequences, as advantageous as the proposed negotiation with the Duke of Savoy. But this apostolic man always pursued the greatest good; and he perfectly undervalued every possible difficulty, even life itself, when the salvation of souls lay before him.

This induced him to reply to the father Esprit, that he was well aware of the consequences of Beza's conversion, as far as it might reflect credit on himself, and prove advantageous to the Catholic Church, if it should succeed; but that it was uncertain; that in the mean time, he observed a disposition in the three bailiwicks to embrace the Catholic faith, if the support of the sovereign could be obtained. He remarked, that in the return of Beza to the Catholic Church, the salvation of one soul only was concerned, as it was not certain that his example would be followed by others; but that with respect to the

bailiwicks, the happiness of thousands was involved, the least of whom had cost our Redeemer, as much as the soul of Beza, whatever credit he might possess in the eyes of the world ; that he never could believe that his Holiness, had he taken any measures which might be injured by delay, would have failed to communicate them, in order to give them their full effect ; that it might hence be inferred, that there would be sufficient time for the business on his return from Turin. He freely owned, that the dispositions of mankind are subject to change ; but he contended that those of Princes are still more variable, because they are obliged to consult the interests of their states, which are in a perpetual fluctuation. He farther urged that it was of the utmost consequence to engage the Duke as early as possible to befriend the conversion of Chablais in a signal manner ; because, after taking the first step, it would not be in his power to recede ; finally that affairs were in such a posture, as demanded the immediate interposition of the sovereign ; that the great number of converts rendered it necessary to provide churches for their religious assemblies, pastors to instruct them, and colleges to train youth, and that many other demands were to be satisfied, which objects could not be attained without the concurrence of the Prince. “ It is

true," added he with a smile, "the season is not favourable; but how many soldiers and merchants daily pass these tremendous mountains, from motives, infinitely inferior to those, which impel us to action."

Nothing was better calculated to excite conviction, than the reasons of Francis; and any one but the father Esprit, would have yielded to their force. But there are certain characters who can never be induced to listen to reason, when it is opposed to a plan, for which they have conceived a predilection. The father Esprit had formed a fair prospect of the conversion of Beza; he was even associated in this important negotiation, and he bore no part in the business to be transacted with the Duke of Savoy. In spite of all our endeavours, we are but too frequently under the influence of self love; it is rare that zeal is so pure, as to be unmingled with some fondness for ourselves. The father Esprit wholly disapproved the reasoning of Francis; he spoke in strong terms of the authority of the Pope, and of the indispensable obligation by which clergymen are bound to shew him prompt obedience, particularly in ecclesiastical concerns.

But Francis, who was not less distinguished by the firmness, than the gentleness of his cha-

racter, replied, that he remained perfectly satisfied, that the views of his Holiness tended to promote the greater good; that if that able pontiff were on the spot, he would order him to pursue, what he was determined to undertake; that he would explain to him the motives of his conduct, and he doubted not that the religious father would help him in justifying the proceeding.

* The father Esprit still remained unconvinced, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of Francis to induce him to adopt his opinion; when a second letter from the Duke of Savoy, of a more pressing nature than the first, very seasonably arrived; the Duke ordered him without urging any pretext for delay, to repair immediately to Chablais, in order to confer with him and the Pope's Nuncio, on the affairs of that country. This letter terminated the discussion; even the father Esprit, who appears on the whole to have been actuated with good intentions, thought he could no longer delay his departure. Thus the negotiation with Beza, was postponed to a more convenient opportunity, as will appear from the progress of this history.

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

The end of November was now approaching. The unusual quantity of snow, which had fallen, and a violent wind from the north, rendered the cold insupportable; the roads, covered with snow, were not to be discerned, and the precipices, with which they are surrounded, excited horror in the breasts of the inhabitants of those savage countries, however they might have been accustomed to such scenes; daily reports were circulated of persons perishing by cold, who had been found on the roads. These obstacles alarmed the most determined courage; no one could possibly suppose it to be the wish of his Royal Highness, that Francis should travel in so inclement a season. But this apostolic man knew no danger, when the glory of God and the salvation of souls called forth his exertions.* The small number of friends, to whom he had communicated the secret of his journey, in vain opposed the design; he departed unexpectedly, attended by one servant only, whom he treated with more tender compassion than himself; this resource was to him a matter of absolute necessity.

It is not difficult to calculate the hardships, which Francis had to endure in this dreadful

* Ibid.

journey. He had to perform the greatest part of it without a guide ; the most advantageous offers, which he could make, were not sufficient to induce any persons of that description to go out in such tempestuous weather ; generally was he reduced to the necessity of depending on the superficial knowledge, which he and his servant had of the course of that frightful country. After suffering incredible fatigues, he arrived in the most boisterous weather at the monastery of St. Bernard, with his servant and their horses, all nearly perishing with cold.* The religious of the monastery were filled with uncommon surprise, to see a person of his description and appearance in such a tempestuous season, when the wolves that abound in those parts, scarcely left their lurking-holes. He had charged his attendant not to mention his name, in order to spare the great attention, which his birth and reputation would necessarily occasion. But the servant, not conceiving himself always bound to observe implicit obedience, and not completely impressed with the spirit of those maxims, which the profound humility of the master suggested, began by declaring who he was, and what were the motives of his journey in such inclement weather.

* Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

Nothing farther was necessary to induce those religious to receive him with all the consideration, which he merited, and to afford him every possible accommodation. His reputation had extended to those parts; and his achievements in Chablais were so publicly diffused, that they escaped no one's knowledge. They considered him as a Saint of the first ages of the Church, and thought themselves honoured in possessing so distinguished a guest. Francis received their attentions with that politeness and sweetness, which won all hearts. It is generally imagined, that Saints are austere in their conduct to others, as they usually shew so much severity to themselves. Francis was certainly not of this description; his conversation was enchanting; his manner easy and pleasing; and in things lawful and indifferent, he discovered a degree of indulgence to others, proportioned to the severity with which he treated himself.

These religious however, were unable to detain their guest as long as they desired. As soon as the tempestuous weather was somewhat abated, he resumed his journey, and arrived at Turin, after having endured all the inconveniences, which can arise to a traveller from impassable roads and an inclement season.

The Duke of Savoy received him with all the consideration, which a sovereign can shew to a subject; he bestowed upon him before his court, all the praises which he merited, and introduced him to the Nuncio of his Holiness, as an extraordinary man who had rendered to the Church the most important services. He made a species of apology for having required his attendance during such a severe season; and told him in private, that foreseeing a journey, which he should have to make to Chablais in person, he thought it prudent not to depart, before he had conferred with him, and taken all necessary measures for the entire conversion of the country; an object, which he was determined to support with the whole weight of his authority.

* His public audience was followed by many private interviews, in which the Duke of Savoy, who was a prince of great discernment, conversed with him confidentially on the situation of his ultramontane provinces. Francis gave him such an account of affairs in those parts, as clearly evinced, that he was not less skilled in political knowledge, than in the science of the Saints. As to the places, to which his mission

* Anon. Book I. Charles Aug. of Sales. Book II.

extended, he informed him, that the lower orders of people in Chablais, were devoted to the Calvinistic religion from no higher motive, but because they were unacquainted with any other; that the middling classes of society, such as the merchants and tradesmen, adhered to it with sufficient sincerity; but that they had more aversion to the Catholic religion, than attachment to their own; that this aversion arose from the frightful representations which had been made of the doctrine of the Church, and of the errors with which she was falsely charged; that both these classes might be gained, by sending among them pastors and preachers of distinguished zeal, who might be enabled to remove their unfounded prejudices, and refute the calumnies, by which the enemies of the Church attempted to tarnish her splendor.

He assured his sovereign, that with respect to the ministers and the leaders of the Calvinists, affairs stood on a different ground; that libertinism, independence, and a total attachment to human interest, were the real motives, which retained them in their religion; that no other proof of this was necessary, than their constant refusal to confer with him, and their obstinacy in denying the Catholic doctrine to be such as he

represented, though his exposition of it was drawn from the council of Trent, the legitimate rule of faith on the contested points; that in support of the same assertion might be adduced a variety of facts, such as their perpetual disputes on their confession of faith, concerning which they had not yet come to an agreement; the violence which they employed to keep the people in their religion, as it appeared from the punishment of the minister, who had been hurried to execution on false charges, because he had returned with sincerity to the Catholic Church; the spirit of calumny, which prevailed among them against Catholics; their connection with the enemies of the state; and their plan of assassination concerted against himself at Geneva, which they had so frequently attempted to carry into execution. He begged his sovereign to believe, that in alluding to this fact, he had no intention of soliciting vengeance; that he pardoned them from his heart, and was persuaded, that it would be better to take no farther notice of the attempt; but that it was undeniable, that persons, who can be induced to employ such measures, in opposition to a conciliating conduct, must render their sincerity extremely suspicious, in an affair of such consequence, and which demands so much uprightness, as the bu-

sinness of religion; that their hatred for the Catholic religion, was connected with their political principles; that the Calvinists were naturally republicans, and hostile to monarchy; that the neighbourhood of Geneva and Switzerland, and their constant connection with those parts, together with their conformity in religious sentiments inflamed this disposition; that they considered their religion a bond of union with their neighbours, and that in preserving the attachment of the people to their church, they were actuated by no higher motives, than the maintenance of their privileges and liberties, which in their judgment depended on their religion; that they loudly declared, the Catholic religion was going to be re-established for no other purpose, than to rob them of their liberty and independence; that if the Calvinists were satisfied to employ no other means, than those of preaching and instruction, to secure the confidence of the people, he should believe, that no other measures should be resorted to; but as they had recourse to means purely human for the maintenance of error, a conduct somewhat similar might be justified in the support of truth.

The Duke, who believed that Francis was persuading him to employ force, in order to

oblige his subjects to return to the Catholic Church, interrupted him to say, that such a string was not to be touched; that military interference would be attended with danger, and would infallibly draw the arms of the Genevans and the Swiss upon Chablais; a situation not altogether suitable to his circumstances. Henry the Great, having embraced the Catholic religion, was in the peaceable enjoyment of the crown of France. That monarch made reiterated demands of the marquisate of Salucca, which was a fief of Dauphine, and had been seized by the Duke during the civil wars of France; as he was determined to keep it, he foresaw that ere long he should be assailed by the French armies; and that if he quarrelled at the same time with the Swiss, he should not be enabled to resist their united forces, and would be in danger of being stripped of his territories, which had been the situation of his father; the example was recent, and naturally made a deeper impression on the prince, as the French, led by so powerful a monarch, were fully able, without the assistance of the Swiss, to renew the scene.

But Francis, who had not entertained a thought of making such a proposition, resumed

his discourse, and said, that though the Swiss and the inhabitants of Geneva had employed force to banish the Catholic religion from their States, and even from his, before he had succeeded to his father, he was far from giving him such counsel; that a great prince like him, knew how to use the sword which God had placed in his hands; but that as to himself, he had meant by human means, honour, places of trust, power, rewards, which should be shared by the Catholics only; that a christian prince is not only able, but that he is obliged to employ such means to establish and support the true religion, which he professes; and that in fact the new converts were so much exposed to the persecution of the Calvinists, as to stand in need of the protection and beneficence of their sovereign; that after all that could be alleged on the subject, he should take the liberty to observe, that the Genevans and the Swiss, were not so formidable as it might be supposed; that a republic so small as that of Geneva, would pause before it drew upon itself the hostility of such a powerful prince as himself; that wholly intent on commerce, it sought only for peace; and that so long as it experienced no attack, it felt no inclination to engage in a quarrel with its neighbours; that in fact the protection of France inspired her with insolence;

that this protection, which was to appear rather in defensive than offensive operations, and which demanded of her very delicate conduct, would retain her within the bounds of duty; that the most christian king, who had lately embraced the Catholic religion, and who was much suspected of favouring the Calvinists, was too good a politician, to approve that the townsmen of Geneva, should presume to controul the conduct, which a Catholic prince should think prudent to adopt in his own dominions; that a period of war was an encouragement to any attempt; but that with the return of peace, princes consulted their true interest, and too clearly calculated the consequences of supporting subjects against their lawful sovereigns; that republics, which had the same interest, pursued the same sentiments.

He further remarked, that the Swiss in particular, exhausted by the dreadful fury of a civil war, which the change of religion had occasioned in their country, entertained only sentiments of peace; that all their best troops were engaged in the service of France and Spain, on conditions too advantageous to their state, to admit their recal, without a necessity of so urgent a nature as the invasion of their country;

that a prince like him, who had to give an account of his actions to God alone, should act on this occasion in a manner suitable to his real interests, which consisted in re-establishing the Catholic religion in his dominions, and that on such a subject, he had only to consult his own understanding, his honour and his conscience.

The Duke received very extraordinary gratification from this discussion, as he little expected it from a man of the youthful appearance of Francis, who was about thirty years old. He believed him to be well skilled in theology and controversy; but he was not prepared to look for such information on political subjects. However, without these attainments, he would not have been so well adapted to the station to which he was called. The civil government and religion of a country are so intimately connected, that any interference with one, necessarily affects the other; the greatest faults therefore, will arise from a partial attention to information concerning one, while the concerns of the other are neglected. Besides it may be pronounced, that these attainments are not altogether so incompatible, as it might be supposed. When the Almighty, in giving laws to the Jews, established the most perfect form of polity, he placed the sacred and political authority in the

hands of the priests; and in the Christian religion, the character of a clergyman and a pastor, by no means destroys that of a citizen, of a member of the state, and of a subject of a prince. There either exists a necessity of declining all employments, in which the public interest is concerned, or it becomes an imperious duty to obtain information on what may be useful or injurious to the political institutions of a country; and it will ever prove a dangerous expedient to entrust even religious affairs to the guidance of those, who are unacquainted with the interfering claims of the state, or who feel no interest whatever in the civil pretensions of their country.

Francis was particularly obliged to attend to these concerns, as he had to do with a people, who had but lately returned to their allegiance to their sovereign, and who, besides professing a religion different from his, maintained a close connection with his enemies. Such a situation of affairs demanded the most cautious and delicate management, lest in re-establishing the ancient religion, he might expose the authority of the prince, and disturb the public tranquillity.

The Duke of Savoy, whose confidence in Francis was considerably increased, was not satis-

fied with the general advice, which had been given; he wished for a more particular detail of all that might contribute to the progress and perfection of the work, which he had undertaken. Francis complied with his wishes, and the Duke desired, that his plan might be committed to writing, and submitted to the inspection of the Council of State, which was to be convened on the following day for the purpose of examining it in his presence.

Francis having repaired to the Council, to which the Archbishop of Bari, the Nuncio of his Holiness, had been invited, repeated the same topics, which he had discussed in his conference with the Duke; and presented the memorial which he had been required to prepare.* The purport of it was, that it became necessary to expel the ministers of the Calvinists from the dominions of the Duke of Savoy, and particularly from Thonon, the inhabitants of which were extremely turbulent and disposed to rebellion; that they not only obstructed the conversion of the people, but that they propagated seditious opinions, and maintained a secret correspondence with the enemies of the state; that as long as they should be

* Aug. of Sales. Book II. Anon. Book I.

suffered to remain in Chablais, and the badiwicka to which his mission extended, nothing of any consequence could be effected; that after all the pains which he had taken in the instruction of those, who appeared well disposed, a bad argument or a menace employed by a minister, was sufficient to destroy the whole effect, and to induce them to embrace their first errors, with more obstinacy than they had before shown; that after the repeated offers, which during two years had been made to them, in the name of the prince, of amicably terminating their disputes by a conference, offers, which they had rejected with invincible obstinacy, they could allege no possible reason of complaint, against that degree of rigour, which their own conduct rendered necessary; that a Catholic prince, bound by a conscientious obligation, to promote the salvation of his subjects, could not lose sight of the necessity of banishing those, whose efforts were wholly directed to the ruin of their fellow creatures, and to the loss of their immortal souls.

The memorial farther stated, that a rigorous search must be made after heretical books, and the reading of them absolutely forbidden, as they produced nearly the same effect, as the seditious

barangues of the ministers, and fomented error and rebellion among the people; that on the suppression of such dangerous productions, others were to be substituted, for the purpose of instructing the people in the truth of the Catholic religion, and of forming them to good conduct and virtue; that in proportion as a nation becomes faithful to God, the more scrupulously exact it is in paying allegiance to its sovereign; and that it has been justly remarked from age to age, that good citizens and good subjects are to be found among the virtuous; that the circulation of good books might be promoted with the utmost facility, and at an inconsiderable expence, if the Duke would be pleased to establish a Catholic printer at Annecy, with some extraordinary privilege and prerogative, which might enable him to support the undertaking.

The memorialist proceeded to observe, that from the same motive of promoting the salvation of the people, it would be necessary to deprive the Calvinists of all places of trust, emolument and honour, and give them to the Catholics; that the Calvinists rendered such advantages subservient to the advancement of error, and employed them as obstructions to the progress of the faith; that they considered it a duty to

support their party; that they secretly involved the Catholics; and those who discovered any inclination to embrace Catholicity, in the most unpleasant difficulties, in order to intimidate the weak; that it was apparent, that they were more affected by present evils, than those which are eternal, and that as they thus abused their authority, it was just and rational to subject them to the punishment of deprivation.

Francis continued to remark, that when all which could aid the progress of error should be removed, it would be necessary to re-establish whatever would tend to support the Catholic religion, principally the parishes and the pastors; that to accomplish this object, it would be necessary only to make an accurate search for the revenues of the benefices usurped by the Calvinists, or unjustly held by persons without title or even the clerical character; that the restitution of dues unjustly held, would enable them to rebuild the demolished churches, and that the current income would be sufficient for the support of the pastors; that for some years, it would be expedient to select, besides the ordinary pastors, at least eight preachers, who were not to be confined to any particular place, but whose duty was to consist in preaching in any part of

the province; that their maintenance would not be burdensome to the state, as they might be supported from the revenues, devoted to the payment of the Calvinistic ministers; that as the town of Thonon was the capital of the province, and contained a great number of Catholics, without including those who might be expected to embrace the Catholic religion, he believed it would be indispensably requisite to restore to the Catholics, the church of St. Hippolytus, and to introduce the practice of celebrating mass and the other parts of the divine service.

Finally Francis added, that as nothing contributes more to the preservation of true religion, than proper care in the education of youth, he judged it to be a measure of absolute necessity, to found a college at Thonon, to be placed under the direction of the Jesuits;* that it would

* The translator, notwithstanding his extreme reserve in obtruding his own opinions on the reader in the shape of notes and illustrations, cannot help adverting to the distinguished veneration with which St. Francis of Sales always treated the great and much injured society of the Jesuits. The opinion of such a man, on the merits of this eminent body, would alone be decisive on the subject; and a very superficial view of their achievements is sufficient to shew, that his admiration was not misplaced.

serve as a species of bulwark against the enterprises of Geneva, and a constant resource against heretical depravity, which had prevailed to such an extent, as to excite the most alarming apprehensions; that this college would answer the purpose of a seminary, which in a short period, would produce persons well informed, and capable of confirming their brethren in the faith; that he knew no persons better qualified to oppose to heretics, than these fathers of the society, who were accustomed to the combat, and whose regular and irreproachable lives set at defiance those calumnies, with which the Calvinists usually darkened the characters of their adversaries; that if this plan should be adopted, it would be easy to find means of carrying it into execution.

Francis having read the memorial of which the substance has been here extracted, the Nuncio

Indeed when we take a view of their great and numerous establishments in every quarter of the world; when we bring to our recollection the regularity and discipline, which prevailed in their colleges, and proved to be admirably calculated to train youth to religion and learning; when we consider the piety and zeal which animated their pursuits; when we survey the various countries which have been indebted to their apostolic labours either for the benefit of the faith, or the diffusion of piety, from the

of his Holiness not only gave it his full approbation, but promised in the name of the sovereign Pontiff, that no endeavours should be wanting on his part, to afford his aid in carrying it into effect. Many of the counsellors of state approved of the substance of the memorial, but were of opinion, that no measure should be pre-

eastern coast of China, to the western shores of America; when we contemplate the immense numbers of learned men formed in this society, and eminent in every branch of science; when we calculate the various and excellent productions, on every subject with which they have favoured the world; we are lost in admiration at the fruits of their tender piety, their unrivalled talents, their persevering zeal; and are constrained to acknowledge them to have been the most distinguished order, that ever adorned the church of Christ. In what other fraternity are we to look for the names of Petavius, of Suard and Vasques, who are called by Benedict the XIV, the lights of the Theological School, of the Father Sirmond? Where are we to find the first of all sciences, the science of the Saints, the principles of an interior life explained with as much precision as in the ascetic treatises of these religious men? But what will probably recommend their merit to the attention of a British public, is their unrivalled excellence in every species of polite literature. From the lofty strains of De la Rue, some of which the great Corneille has honoured with a translation into French verse, to the elegant and delicate effusions of Commirius, every kind of poetical excellence may be found? They are not less distinguished by a series of great writers, who have fa-

capitately resorted to, and that the execution of at least a part of the plan, should be postponed to a more convenient season. They alleged, in support of their opinion, that the political body bore a great analogy to the human frame; that health once impaired, is not instantly restored; that time must be allowed to the remedies pre-

pared the world with various specimens of historical composition. Bigotry will not withhold applause from the performances of Maffei, of Juveny and of Strada. As long as the eloquence of the pulpit is held in any estimation, the names of Bourdaloue, of Neuville, and of De la Rue, will be remembered with the highest distinction. It is almost injurious to their credit to mention but a few names; but a bare list of those, whom their productions have rendered eminent, would swell this note to an immeasurable length. Of such a society, so formed, so much ennobled by piety, learning and apostolic zeal, who can refrain from lamenting the fall? Who can endure that their reputation should be tarnished by the calumnies of D'Alembert and other writers, who have undeservedly been dignified with the appellation of philosophers? The slender tribute here given to their merit, the translator believes to be strictly due to this memorable society; and he hopes to be excused for thus shedding a passing tear on the tomb of departed greatness.

His saltem accumulæ donis, et fugar inani
Munere.

With sighs let one his tender tribute bring,
And in these unavailing accents sing.

scribed, to produce their full effect; that the frame must not be oppressed; that nature must be indulged, and ample time given that both may be suffered to operate; that there are seasons and circumstances which forbid the application of any remedy; that an eager wish to hasten the cure often ruins the patient; that it was improper to adopt the same conduct towards frontier provinces, as would be shewn towards those situated in the heart of the state, and at sufficient distance from the machinations of foreign enemies; that Geneva and the Swiss, the neighbours of Chablais, would not behold with indifference, the execution of the proposed plan; that the least that might be expected would be, that a part of the subjects of his Royal Highness, would renounce their allegiance, repair to a foreign standard, and complete the ruin of his provinces; that before matters could be carried with a high hand, it would be prudent to await the termination of their differences with France respecting the marquisate of Salucca.

Francis, who had foreseen that his plan would not pass without opposition, asked permission of the Duke to justify, what he had advanced; and having obtained it, he represented with his usual meekness, that if there are some evils, which are

not to be exasperated, there are others, which are not to be treated with too much tenderness; that nature by receiving too much indulgence, might finally yield to the violence of the evil; and that time, so far from healing disorders of a certain description, will often render them completely incurable; that to apply these general principles to the discussion relative to Chablais and the bailiwicks, it could not be asserted that any steps had been precipitately taken, or that care had not been employed to ascertain the time and circumstances proper for the proposed measures; that two years had elapsed, since he first entered Chablais by the express order of the prince; that no gentle means of promoting conciliation had been left unattempted, and that every plan of this nature had been rejected with invincible obstinacy; that he should never be the adviser of violent measures; but that it would be a singular mistake to imagine that the Catholic religion could be established in Chablais, without resorting to other means, than those, which had been adopted; that Geneva and the Swiss would seriously pause, before they came to an open rupture with the Duke; that, if that event were to take place, they were not to be dreaded; that they could claim no more right to interfere in the concerns of his Royal Highness,

than he could to regulate their affairs; that as they would discover the greatest unwillingness to suffer him to dictate on a point so important as that of religion, they could not expect that a business of a similar nature should be referred to their decision; that they might complain, remonstrate, negotiate and even proceed to menaces, but that it was not probable, that they would go to greater lengths; that possibly the most obstinate and factious among the Calvinists might leave the country, but that by such an event, the state would gain more than it would lose; and that persons of this description, after experiencing the harsh and jealous treatment of strangers, and enduring the difficulties and hardships even of a voluntary exile, would be extremely happy to return to their own country, on the conditions, which their sovereign might be disposed to grant.

Then addressing his discourse to those counsellors of state, who were of opinion that the plan proposed by Francis, should not be carried into effect in all its parts, he asked what happier moment could be selected for the execution of his project, than the present period; he observed, that they were in the enjoyment of a profound peace, governed by a powerful prince, who was

esteemed and revered by his neighbours, who had subdued that people, concerning whom such apprehensions were entertained; who was beloved and respected by his subjects, and capable of undertaking whatever might be judged proper for the security of his dominions; he was fully aware that the affair of Salucca, was an obstacle to the execution of the design respecting Chablais; but still he contended that, as that delicate transaction had been referred to the arbitration of his Holiness, it rested with the Duke to terminate the difference in a most amicable manner.

No sooner had Francis finished his harangue, than the Duke rose, and instantly complied with the whole of his demand, with the exception of two articles, the execution of which he promised should not be long delayed. He allowed him in particular to take possession of the church of St. Hippolytus, and there to celebrate the divine mysteries and perform the whole of the service; he promised him to address letters to the officers of the town, in order to explain his intentions; as well as to the governor of Chablais, with directions to execute his orders; and he recommended to him, on his return to the scene of his operations, to transmit to him a regular account of his proceedings.

Francis after this had several conferences with the Pope's Nuncio; he spoke to him of the orders which he had received from his Holiness relative to Theodore Beza, and of the reasons, which had induced him to postpone that affair till his return. The Nuncio approved of his conduct, engaged to explain it satisfactorily to his Holiness, assured him of the esteem and confidence of the Pontiff, and promised to exert his influence both with him and the Duke of Savoy to accelerate the execution of his proposed plan. "You will," added he, "need much support. The Prince has the best intentions; but he is surrounded by counsellors, who are either unreasonably timid or gained by the Calvinists; every accident alarms them; and they will spare no pains to divert their master from the execution of his laudable purposes. But he has given you his word; and I will leave nothing unattempted to induce him to fulfil his engagements."

In the mean time, Francis having made preparations for his return, was admitted by the Duke to the last audience. * This Prince delivered to him the promised letters, with others, containing orders, that a sufficient revenue should be

* Aug. of Sales. Book II.

given to him from the Ducal domains for his own support and that of his missionaries. The Duke expected that he would solicit some favour for himself, or that at least he would ask to be reimbursed for what he had advanced; but finding him preserve an uninterrupted silence on that subject, his Highness ventured himself to make the overture with such distinguished marks of kindness, as others would have embraced with avidity to promote their own advantage.

Francis seized this opportunity, not to forward his private interest, but that of the chapter of Geneva, at the head of which he had been placed. He accordingly represented to the Duke the extreme distress of that fraternity, after their revenues had been seized by the inhabitants of Geneva; and their inability to perform the divine service with the decorum due to the first church of a diocese; that the Popes Pius IV, and Gregory XIII, had, in consequence of this event, exempted them from the payment of tithes under all circumstances; that inferior agents had however exacted payment with the utmost rigour; he therefore entreated his sovereign to confirm this immunity, and to restore to them the usurped revenues in the different parts of his dominions, and particularly the priory of Armoiy, their claim

to which they could support by the most authentic titles.

The Duke struck with admiration at this disinterested conduct, instantly complied with his request, and directed that orders should be issued to this effect. He renewed his assurances, that he would proceed in person to second his laudable views; he freely declared that he should postpone to that period only, the execution of the two articles of his plan, relative to the ministers and the Calvinistic magistrates; and he dismissed him with innumerable marks of esteem and kindness.

In the mean time the winter continued with unabated severity;* and the Alps, covered with an additional fall of snow after the period of his arrival at Turin, seemed to oppose a fresh obstacle to his return. The Duke of Savoy, the Nuncio of his Holiness, and an immense concourse of friends, whom he had made at Court, wished him to wait for a more favourable season; but Francis, who, in no part of his life, was ever disposed to spare himself, when the interests of heaven were concerned, and who, in this in-

* 1596.

stance, was persuaded that his presence was necessary at Thonon, could not be detained by any consideration. The only precaution which he took, was to return by the mountain, called the little St. Bernard, where indeed the roads were less unfavourable. On his arrival at Thonon, he visited the Catholics, and found to his satisfaction, that their zeal had continued undiminished during his absence. He recommended to their prayers, the public re-establishment of the Catholic religion at Thonon, and in the whole of Chablais: he produced the order of the Duke for this purpose, and spent many days in prayer and fasting, to beg of God, that this event might take place without confusion, and that the extremities, to which the Duke might be obliged to proceed, in the event of any opposition to his will, might by the divine blessing, be averted.

Christmas was now approaching; and as Francis and the Catholics were extremely anxious, that the church of St. Hippolytus, of which he was authorized to take possession, should be recovered, in order to celebrate the divine mysteries on that great festival, he hastened to deliver to the governor of Chablais, and to the magistrates of Thonon, the letters for that purpose, of which he was the bearer from the Duke. The

governor gave him every assurance of protection, which he might want, and begged him to send an exact relation of the proceedings, which should take place at Thonon.

The magistrates had no sooner received the letters of the Duke, requiring them to restore to the Catholics, the church of St. Hippolytus, and to offer no molestation to the divine service, which was there to be performed by his orders, than they themselves began to foment sedition.* The gates of the town were instantly shut, to prevent the governor and the Catholics of the country, from affording assistance to their friends within the walls; at the same time, the Calvinists flew to arms; a part of them invested the church of St. Hippolytus, and others dispersed themselves over the town, uttering the most furious menaces to murder the Catholics, and to burn Francis alive and exhibit him as a public spectacle. The Catholics alarmed at their own danger, but more at that, with which their pastor was threatened, took arms in their own defence; and acknowledging no other leader than Francis, and in his person the Duke, whose orders he was commissioned to execute, threatened in their turn,

* Aug. of Sales. Book III.

to sell their lives dearly, and declared that the magistrates should be responsible, at the hazard of their existence, for the safety of Francis. They were sufficiently numerous, and too well armed to excite contempt; the authority of the Prince, with which they were invested, augmented their courage, and the despair, to which the violent proceedings of the Calvinists reduced them, drove them beyond the usual bounds of restraint, and afforded every reason to apprehend their resentment. It appeared that orders were secretly issued by some commander; for they took possession with great regularity of several advantageous posts, where small bodies might be opposed with effect to superior numbers. The personal safety of Francis was one of the first objects of attention; they surrounded his house, and notwithstanding his repeated and anxious wishes not to oppose force to force, notwithstanding his earnest assurances, that he could experience no greater happiness, than to die in the cause, in which he was engaged, it was not in his power to restrain their ardour.

In the mean time night approached; and as the Calvinists who had seized the church of St. Hippolytus began to retire, to take some repose after a very turbulent day, the Catholics with more

perseverance took possession of the church in their turn. Francis, having a sufficient number of workmen at command, began the necessary reparations. The Calvinists, on receiving intelligence of this step, resumed their arms; and both sides, after remaining some time in a menacing attitude, were ready to engage, when Francis, whose extreme mildness of character produced the utmost aversion to violence, threw himself between both parties at the hazard of his life. His presence checked the ardour of the Catholics, and suspended the fury of their enemies. He called for the magistrates; and speaking in an audible tone of voice, to be heard by the whole multitude, he represented with much force, that had he undertaken by his own authority, to restore to the Catholics the church of St. Hippolytus, their opposition would have been justifiable; that, even in that case, they should have proceeded with the decorum and the forms of justice, and not with arms in their hands, which no person can be authorized to employ but by the permission of the sovereign, in his service, and assuredly not against his will; that they were perfectly well aware, that he took no step in this business, but by the orders of his sovereign; for he had delivered the Duke's letters into their hands; that instead of carrying these

injunctions into effect as their situation obliged them to do, it was observable, that, by their orders, at least by their consent, the inhabitants had taken arms against each other, sedition had been fomented, and the mandates of their sovereign treated with ignominy and scorn; that they had already proceeded too far, and that if they suffered this melancholy affair to be carried to greater lengths, such a dereliction of duty could be expiated only by the entire destruction of their city. He assured them, that he did not wish to appear as their accuser; but that being charged with the orders of their Prince, he could not avoid the indispensable obligation of informing him, in what manner they had been executed; that it was not the intention of the Duke to deprive them of the liberty of conscience, which he had granted; but that it was perfectly rational, that, as they had many other places of worship, the Catholics, who were extremely numerous, should at least have one, in which they might perform the duties of religion; that no invasion was made of their property; that they had not built the church of St. Hippolytus; that it had belonged to the Catholics for many centuries, who only took possession of property which had been wrested from them by violence; that, if the same violence had been shewn to them, they would

have had a just ground of complaint; that it was wholly an unexampled circumstance, that a sovereign in his own dominions should not have it in his power to give to those of his own religion, a proper place of worship. He therefore conjured them, by the love which they owed to their country, by the concern, which they should entertain for their own safety, to open their eyes to the danger to which they were exposed, by persisting in their disobedience to the orders of their sovereign. He made an offer of his own mediation between them and their offended Prince, if they were disposed to return to their duty; but he informed them, that they had every thing to fear from his justice, if they continued to oppose the execution of his orders.

This firm and mild harangue was received by the Catholics with a tumult of applause; on the part of the Calvinists, it was answered by the most injurious language. On every side were heard confused murmurs and the opprobrious terms of papist, idolater, sorcerer, disturber of the public peace, sworn enemy of his country; and the whole assembly appeared disposed to proceed to the utmost extremities, when the more sober part of the council thought proper to pro-

pose an accommodation. * This proposition suspended the fury of the people; they entered in crowds the house of Francis, which was adjoining; there many different expedients were offered; but as they all tended to obtain a suspension of the orders of the Prince, till they should make an appeal, and receive an answer, Francis rejected them with a degree of firmness, which excited no inconsiderable surprise. He contended in his turn, that the injunctions of the sovereign should be provisionally executed; and he added that if they should receive a favourable answer to their remonstrance, it would not be necessary to take arms, in order to enforce a compliance with the mandate. The counsellors, despairing to gain their point, threatened him with secret assassination from the hand of some Calvinist,† who should feign a desire of embracing the Catholic religion: but Francis replied in a tone of assurance, which completed their confusion, that they might already have seen how little he feared death; and that the only source of regret in shedding his blood in so noble a cause, would be, that the crime of the assassins would be punished with the utmost severity of vengeance, and that not one of

* Aug. of Sales. Book III. Anon. Book I.

† Anon. Book I.

them would escape the resentment of the Prince. He exhorted them to weigh deliberately the consequences of such a transaction, and instead of persisting in their obstinacy, to employ their influence, in restoring a sense of duty and order among the people. The counsellors still renewed their entreaties; but they at length retired, after loudly proclaiming the fatal consequences of his conduct, if he should carry the business farther.

In the mean time, the leaders having seriously reflected on the unpleasant result, which might attend this affair, thought it prudent to inform the people, that a mutual agreement had been made; that doubtless the sovereign, better informed, would do them justice; that in the mean time, to shew their respect for his orders they had determined provisionally to carry them into effect, without withdrawing their opposition. Thus Francis took possession of the church of St. Hippolytus; he finished the repairs and decorations with incredible dispatch, and the place was ready for use at the festival of Christmas.

On the night of this great festival, the Catholics assembled not only from the city, but from the adjoining villages; and in their presence he

celebrated the divine mysteries, which had been banished from the place for almost a century. Eight hundred persons received the holy sacrament from his hands; he preached with his usual zeal, and spent the whole night in praising God, who, after abandoning his people for so long a period to the desires of their hearts, had at length recalled them to his admirable light.* On the following festivals, he continued the same exercises of piety; and heaven bestowed on his labours such an ample benediction, that the inhabitants of the three neighbouring villages came in a body to abjure their errors.

It is not easy to conceive, how one man could be equal to such multiplied labours. In proportion as the number of the Catholics increased, he multiplied his conferences and instructions; he received all descriptions of persons both in public and in private, without any apprehension of the menaces of the Calvinists, who were themselves astonished at his undaunted courage and his invincible firmness. He assisted at funerals; he relieved the sick; he went himself to hamlets and mean cottages, to visit persons in the most destitute and deplorable condition; nothing eluded

* Anon. *ibid.*

his vigilance; his charity was extended to every want; he was as assiduous in his attention to persons of the lowest condition, as to those who were distinguished by their birth, or their employments. He made himself all to all; and as he viewed God in all things, and knew that souls are to Him equally dear, he paid as much attention to the poor as to the rich, and directed his charity by the extent of their wants, and not by their rank in life.

After having spent the day in the laborious functions of the ministry, the night was to him by no means a time of repose; a part of it he usually employed in administering the sacraments to the sick. He was apprehensive that the Calvinists might in the day time fail in respect to the divine mysteries, and that he should feel himself obliged to lodge informations against them before the Duke, who had expressly ordered, that the Catholics should not be disturbed in the exercise of their religion: he was accordingly fearful of exposing himself to difficulties; and was unwilling that the hatred which he might excite by making just complaints, should be directed against the Catholic Church, and thus impede the progress of the faith. Thus was he always careful to pay a charitable attention to the feelings of

those, who instead of shewing proper decorum towards him, did not always consult their own interests with sufficient circumspection. After taking a small share of rest, and generally without undressing himself, he spent the remaining part of the night in prayer, or in preparing his instructions for the following day. The excellence of his constitution prevented him at the time from feeling the effects of labour, under which the ordinary strength of man would have sunk ; but he unquestionably shortened his valuable life by many years. A cause must always produce a corresponding effect ; and old age, at which he never arrived, fails not to feel the consequences of the labours of youth. His friends frequently exhorted him to be more careful of himself ; but he usually replied : " It is not necessary that I should live ; but it is necessary that the Church should be served."

* His occupations, however, did not prevent him from transmitting to the Duke of Savoy, an exact relation of all that had passed at Thonon. He wrote at the same time to the Nuncio at that court, requesting his support. The magistrates on their side, forwarded their own account of the

* 1597.

transaction. But the Duke wanted no solicitation to support Francis in a conjuncture, in which his own authority had been treated with such marked contempt. The first proof of his indignation against the city of Thonon, was to return no answer to the magistrates.* His reply to Francis could not be expressed in terms more favourable. He spoke in high strains of commendation of his zeal and of his prudence; he approved of all that he had done, and of all that he should think proper to do for the re-establishment of the Catholic religion; and he desired him to shew the letter to the magistrates and to the counsel. Francis sent it to them; and their feelings were as much roused, as if they had no reason to suppose, that their conduct would meet with disapprobation.

But their surprise was considerably increased, when, without any previous notice, they witnessed the arrival at Thonon of the regiment of the Count of Martinengue, Lieutenant General of the armies of the Duke; this officer quartered his troops in the city till he should receive farther orders from the court. Francis was at that time preaching the lent in different parts of Chablais;

* Aug. of Sales. Book III.

and deeply engaged in defeating the machinations of the Calvinists, in confirming the faith of the new converts, who were exposed to great persecutions, and in gaining daily some new conquest for the Catholic Church.

No sooner was he returned to Thonon, than the officers of the regiment repaired to him in a body to pay their respects; they informed him, that they had orders to do nothing without his participation, and on all occasions to act agreeably to his suggestions. But Francis, who in the functions of his ministry, never availed himself of temporal support, but under the pressure of extreme necessity, made no other use of their obsequious attention, than to engage them to lead orderly lives, and to become as little burdensome as possible to the inhabitants of Thonon. As he observed them to assist assiduously at his sermons, he changed his method of instruction; and instead of discussing topics of controversy, which formed the usual subject of his discourses, he thought it necessary to expatiate on subjects of morality, which might be equally useful to the ancient Catholics and to the new converts. He spoke on the leading truths of the Christian religion; truths, which are adapted to every situation in life; and he treated his subjects with so much

force, and in such a popular style of eloquence, that his audience was perpetually crowded.

God gave a blessing to the design which he had formed to promote the conversion of the officers and soldiers; in a short time a change, similar to that already related concerning the garrison of Allinges, was observed to take place.* There was scarcely an officer or soldier in the regiment, who did not make a general confession and receive the holy sacrament from his hands. Changes of this nature are frequently observed to be of short duration; inveterate habits but too often acquire new strength, from a want of vigilance to oppose them; and bad example as well as dangerous occasions, occur so frequently in a military life, that it becomes a matter of extreme difficulty not to yield to the torrent. These dangers Francis foresaw, and these he laboured to obviate by precautions of so salutary a nature, that his new penitents requested him to commit them to writing, for the purpose of occasional inspection. He complied with their wishes, and at the same time laid down rules of a christian life, so well adapted to their situation, that no one declined the obligation of reducing them to practice. Thus every

* Aug. of Sales. Book III.

thing being peaceable in Chablais, and the Catholic religion making a daily progress, Francis considered it a duty to execute the commission, which he had received from his Holiness concerning Theodore Beza.

But a project of this nature was necessarily attended with much difficulty in the execution. Beza, who was at that time seventy years old, never left Geneva; he was in a manner guarded with suspicious vigilance. Whether the inhabitants of Geneva began to entertain any distrust in his sincerity, or that the circumstance originated in their esteem for his merit, or in the pleasure, which they derived from his conversation, his house was always crowded with visitors; and it would have been peculiarly difficult for Francis to find him disengaged, as he thought it prudent to give no notice of the visit, which he intended to pay. Besides Francis was well known at Geneva; and his achievements in Chablais had rendered him so odious in that place, that the journey must necessarily be attended with extreme danger. The motive of the proceeding increased the hazard; a negotiation of so delicate a nature could not be brought to a close in a single visit; the journey must consequently be often repeated, and it was morally impossible to conceal the

design from public view. Such an attempt, would have been regarded as a crime, deserving of exemplary punishment; and it was not difficult to dispatch Francis in a manner so private, as to keep the transaction a profound secret. In a popular state like that of Geneva, the hand of the bold and enterprising assassin is seldom wanting; and all mankind are well aware what blind zeal, animated by the most powerful of all motives, an ardour for religion, is capable of effecting.

The small number of friends, to whom Francis communicated his design, naturally indulged in these reflections, and spared no pains to divert him from his purpose; but this great man knew no danger, when the glory of God called him to action.* He contented himself with writing to the Bishop of Geneva, to the Chapter, and to all his virtuous friends, who were capable of keeping a secret, to request them to recommend to God the success of the enterprise; he himself redoubled his fasts and his prayers; and as he knew that the conversion of a hardened sinner, can proceed only from the Father of lights, who, whenever it pleases him, can from stones, raise up children to Abraham, he employed many days in

* Aug. of Sales. Book III.

asking for that spirit of force and prudence, which brings the most difficult affairs to a happy termination. Thus full of zeal and confidence, and committing to the hands of God the care of his life, which he was going to expose in his service, he departed for Geneva.

* Fortunately Beza was alone, when Francis arrived at his house. Such a happy conjuncture was necessarily embraced with avidity. Accordingly Francis, after the first salutations had taken place, opened the purpose of his visit, and said to Beza, that not having the honour of being known to him, he had to request him, not to judge of his conduct by the frightful representations given by his adversaries; that he was the last person in the world, who would wish to deviate from candour and sincerity; that he came not to surprise him, or for the purpose of publishing to the world, what should pass between them; that if he would have the goodness to examine his air and his deportment, he would find them marked with candour and uprightness; that God had stamped the countenance of man with the character of the mind and the heart; and that even were he desirous to practise deceit on any human

being, a thing which he was incapable of attempting, he certainly should not wish to try the experiment with a person of his merit and reputation.

Indeed the personal appearance of Francis was so enchanting and marked with such an air of uprightness and probity, that he ran no hazard in depending on the judgment, which might be formed of him by the beholder; and the illiberal accounts which had been circulated against him at Geneva, did not permit him to look for the confidence of Beza, which was so necessary to the success of his design, without destroying the unpleasant impressions, that had been raised against his personal qualities. Beza on his side, valued himself much upon openness of character; men are usually fond of dispositions similar to their own; and the surest way to the heart is a similarity of temper. The introductory address of Francis was by no means displeasing to Beza. He replied to him with much politeness, that he had always known him to be a man of distinguished rank and of superior merit; that even his enemies acknowledged the excellence of his capacity, and the extent of his learning; that as to himself, he viewed his accomplishments with peculiar admiration, as such advantages were extremely rare, at so early a period of

life; but that he could not help regretting, that such splendid talents, should be employed in supporting so deplorable a cause, as that of the Church of Rome.

Francis, who had no time to lose, took occasion from these last words of Beza, to enter fully into the object of his journey; and he did it, by conjuring him to say, if he was really convinced, that salvation was attainable in the Catholic Church. This question was a natural consequence of what Beza had advanced; he was however so embarrassed with it, that after remaining some time without making a reply,* he desired Francis to allow him to retire a few moments to his cabinet, to consider more fully what answer he should give. He was there about a quarter of an hour, walking about with much hurry, and such a degree of uneasiness painted on his countenance, as indicated the agitation of his heart, and the disorder of his conscience. Francis employed this time in beseeching God with extraordinary fervour, that he would be pleased to shew mercy to this man, whom he had favoured with such distinguished graces, and who on account of his great age, was ready to fall into the hands of his justice.

* Aug. of Sales. Book III.

But there are crimes, from which the sinner seldom emerges; this the authors of heresies and schisms have but too often fatally experienced, and we have upon record scarcely any instances of those, who after abandoning the Church, have sincerely returned to its pale. To an unfortunate collection of such examples, we are doomed to add the name of Theodore Beza. Full of remorse of conscience, he returns to Francis, and addresses him in this manner: * “ You asked me, if salvation was attainable in the Catholic Church. We are alone; I can expose my real sentiments; yes, I believe salvation to be there attainable.”

Francis availing himself of an answer, which gave him such a manifest advantage over Beza, observed, that he must therefore believe that the Catholic Church was the true Church; because if it were not the Church established by Christ, it would no more be possible to obtain salvation in it, than it was in the time of the deluge to be secured from destruction without entering the ark. As Beza made no reply, Francis continued to press the argument, by asking, if salvation was attainable in the Catholic Church, why he had

* Aug. of Sales. Book III. Auon. Book I.

left it? Why he had abandoned its communion and solicited and engaged such numbers to follow his example? He observed to him, that nothing but the absolute impossibility of being saved in the Catholic Church, could justify a separation, which had produced such fatal effects, and which was still attended with the most lamentable consequences.

Beza replied, that they were not the authors of the schism; that all the blame of that event must be thrown on the Catholic Church, who had excommunicated them, ejected them from its pale, and treated them as heretics, with whom no communication was to be held.

Francis on his side contended, that the Catholic Church had done only what the conduct of the Calvinists had rendered indispensably necessary; that in all well regulated societies there is a supreme judge to terminate any differences, which may arise either concerning faith, or any other question; that the Calvinists themselves acknowledged this supreme authority, which some of them placed in the national synod, as the Catholics did in a general council; that all individuals, who compose such a society, were obliged to submit to the decision of this supreme judge;

that when he had pronounced on the merits of a question, there was no farther appeal from his authority; that without such a resource disputes would be perpetuated to an eternity, and the most trifling contest could never be brought to a close; that if it happened that any individuals should think proper obstinately to persist in their own sentiments, refuse to admit the decision of the supreme authority, and thus proceed to a separation from the rest of the society, in order to form private associations, the blame of such a transaction could not fall on the general society, which in this instance would only maintain its own rights, and follow its established and acknowledged laws; but that the whole weight of guilt would fall on those individuals, who should refuse to submit to the laws of that general society, from which they chose to commence a separation.

He added, that these principles should be applied to the fact under consideration; that when Calvin and some of his disciples, who were only private men, born and educated in the Catholic Church, subjected to its laws and bound to admit its authority, had risen against the mother Church, accused her of many fundamental errors, and of having corrupted the word of God, it

was not just and rational, that they should constitute themselves judges of the difference; that in such a delicate proceeding recourse was to be had to the supreme authority; that the Catholics had adopted that method; that the council of Trent had met for the purpose, had spoken, had adjusted the difference, had decided the contested points; that the Catholics, agreeably to the established order, had yielded to its decisions; that the Calvinists should have imitated the same conduct; that thus their proceedings would have been orderly, and the disputes brought to a conclusion; and at this hour they would have been united in the same communion. But that instead of following at that critical juncture, the salutary regulations established by Christ, who has given to the Church the ultimate power of deciding disputes, they had made themselves judges in their own cause; they had even proceeded farther; they had demolished the temples, consecrated to the same God, whom they adored; or they had taken possession of them by violence, had expelled the old ministers of religion, who were peaceably engaged in the discharge of their functions; that they had built other churches; that they had raised altar against altar, and usurped the functions of the sacred ministry; and that, after having withdrawn a part of Europe from the

jurisdiction of their ordinary and legitimate pastors, they had established themselves as pastors of the people, in defiance of that Church, which he himself acknowledged to be the true Church, and in which he believed salvation to be attainable. "After this undeniable statement," exclaimed Francis with an air of decision, "What possible ground can be alleged for the charge against the Catholic Church, that she was the cause of the schism, and that she constrained the Calvinists, by unjust and precipitate censures to leave her communion?"

Francis perceiving that Beza was not disposed to interrupt him, asked what plan of conduct would be observed in his communion towards individuals, who should make the same attempts against the body, as the Calvinists had made against the Catholic Church. Beza replied, that such persons would not be condemned without being heard, as the Catholic Church had done with respect to the Calvinists; and that if it should be found necessary to proceed to a sentence of condemnation, the true rule of faith would be followed; which was by no means the conduct of the council of Trent.

Francis, who expected this answer, replied, that in the condemnation of false doctrine, it was not indispensably necessary, that the authors of it should be heard in their defence; that otherwise an anonymous performance, containing the most impious doctrines, could never be subjected to a well merited sentence. But he observed, that something more could be said respecting the Protestants; that they had been invited to the council of Trent; that they had been waited for a considerable time; that it had depended solely on themselves to be present and to be heard; that passes had been offered to them in the best forms with every security they could desire; that on their refusal to appear, their works, which had been made public, and of which the true meaning could not be mistaken, had been carefully consulted; that it had not been judged proper, that their refusal to appear should prevent the condemnation of their doctrine; that in all courts of judicature, a similar conduct had been invariably adopted; and that they themselves under similar circumstances would ever act in the same manner.

Beza replied that the Protestants were fully justified in refusing to appear at the council of Trent; that though passes were certainly offered

to them for the purpose, yet that it was a notorious fact, that Catholics professed a general maxim of never keeping faith with heretics; that the violation by the council of Constance of the safe-conduct granted to the Hussites, was a proof so notorious to the world of this assertion, that it could not remain a matter of doubt; that after such an example, those whom the Catholics regarded as heretics, could repose no confidence in any security of this nature, which might be offered them, as there never was a safe-conduct more ample, or presented in a better form, than that granted by the Emperor Sigismond to John Huss; that notwithstanding, the council of Constance had thought proper to break through this security in the person of the same John Huss, and his disciple Jerom of Prague.

Francis replied, that this reproach against the Catholics of violating faith with heretics, was an old calumny so frequently refuted, that he was at a loss to discover, how it could be revived; that the Catholics were so convinced of the obligation of keeping faith with persons of every description, without any exception whatever, that neither the example of the council of Constance, even were it such as it was represented, nor any other autho-

city, would ever alter their sentiments in this particular.

He added that the intemperate heat of the enemies of the Church, had produced too much bitterness and acrimony with respect to the transactions of Constance, and had prevented them from examining the memorable fact under consideration with common candour; that most assuredly the safe-conduct granted by the Emperor had been violated; but that as Constance was a free town, governed by a magistrate enjoying supreme authority, he alone was competent to give a safe-conduct within the town and the limits of his jurisdiction; that John Huss, aware of this circumstance, had obtained a safe-conduct from this sovereign magistrate; that this instrument being given with certain conditions and restrictions, and that John Huss and his associates, having violated the conditions expressly contained in the safe-conduct, the council of Constance thought that it could be no security from punishment; and that the fathers of that assembly could never be charged with violating public faith in condemning persons who had acknowledged their tribunal, and submitted to their judgment. Francis farther remarked, that, whatever we

might be made of this example of the council of Constance, it formed no rule of conduct in the Catholic Church; that Catholics were fully convinced, that, when they had given their word to any human being, they were under a conscientious obligation of keeping it.

To this clear and satisfactory statement, Beza made no reply. Francis therefore asked him, what was the rule of faith, which the council of Trent had not followed? Beza answered that the scripture alone was the true rule of faith; that nevertheless the council in many of its decisions had followed another. Francis not thinking it needful to enter into a discussion of the fact, confined himself to an examination of the principle, and replied to Beza, that as the holy scripture might bear many interpretations, and could not explain itself, it was necessary, that there should exist in the Church, some authority, which might claim the right of expounding and of ascertaining the true meaning. Beza insisted that this authority was not necessary; that every one among the faithful possessed the right of determining the sense of the scripture; that the scripture was not obscure; that the Holy Spirit sufficiently inspired all the faithful to comprehend the true meaning of the sacred oracles.

Francis did not fail to take advantage of an answer, which it was easy for him to foresee. The point was of essential consequence; the discussion turned upon the rule of faith, that is, upon the foundation of all disputes; and if this be unsound, the whole superstructure raised upon it, falls by its own weight to the ground. He therefore asked his adversary in a tone of earnestness, how it happened that since the holy scripture was so perfectly clear, the Protestants themselves had given interpretations of it, so widely different, and often of a contradictory nature? Why did Luther, who passed among them as a man inspired by God, understand the words of the institution of the Eucharist, in a sense implying the real presence, while Calvin contended for the figurative meaning, and thus established a doctrine in perfect contradiction to the first reformer? What proof could be adduced that such a degree of inspiration was granted by the Divine Spirit to all the faithful? Was it apparent, that this inspiration would be given rather to John Calvin, than to the Church, whom the Holy Scripture calls the pillar, that is the support of truth? What well-founded assurance can be afforded, that these pretended inspirations proceed from the Divine Spirit, and not from the

spirit of error, which, agreeably to the same scripture, often transforms himself into an angel of light to seduce the faithful? Beza was extremely embarrassed at all these questions, which formed so many convincing proofs of the fallacy of what he had advanced. But in the heat of a dispute men are usually disposed rather to give a bad answer than none at all; he therefore contended, that as the understanding of the scripture was absolutely necessary to the Church, that is to the faithful who compose it, there could be no ground of doubt, that the divine spirit, who governs the Church invisibly, would make the divine oracles intelligible by secret inspirations, as that was his usual way of enlightening the mind; and affecting the heart?

As this could not be considered in any other light than as a repetition of the same answer in different words, Francis proceeded to ask, if the Divine Spirit gave these inspirations to all who read the scripture with a sincere desire to understand it, or to some only? "If they are given to all," added he, "how happens it that the Catholics, the far greater number of Christians, are not equally favoured, but are obliged to have recourse to the Church, to *the pillar of truth*, in order to have the true meaning of the divine oracles?

Can it be asserted, with any appearance of reason, that by means of these boasted inspirations, every private person becomes acquainted with the truth; but that when all are assembled in a body, they drop this salutary knowledge? But if on the contrary, all the faithful are not gifted with this inspired knowledge, but only some part of the flock of Christ, it becomes a matter of absolute necessity, to have certain marks, by which these favoured spirits may be distinguished; for whatever assurances an individual may give, that he possesses a portion of this infused knowledge, we can never be obliged to believe him on his word."

These inconveniences arising from the system, were more than sufficient to destroy the pretended inspirations of Beza. But Francis, who was willing completely to convince him, that the Calvinists, so far from being entitled to the appellation of reformers of the faith, knew not even what was the true rule, by which it was to be ascertained, continued to press his adversary, and to demonstrate, that were we to admit these inspirations as real, it would follow by an inevitable consequence, that the Spirit of God often bestowed inspirations, contradictory to each other. In proof of this, he mentioned Luther, who rejects

certain books of the scripture, which Calvin receives as canonical; and he observed, that the former finds the real presence in the scripture, while the latter sees only the figurative meaning. He then contended, with great force of reasoning, that it was not probable, that the Almighty would have abandoned the faithful during so many ages to the delusion of error, and that he reserved these inspirations for a few individuals of the last century; that he could have concealed so much light from so many humble and learned doctors, whose sole occupation was an enquiry after truth, in order to diffuse it on John Calvin, and to open to him the hidden treasures of faith.

Francis concluded from all these observations, that the Calvinists, so far from having any right to arraign the Catholic Church on the subject of its doctrine, and to charge the council of Trent with not having followed the true rule of faith, were themselves unacquainted with it; that on the supposition that the scripture was so very clear, that all the faithful could understand it without any extraordinary assistance, even if private persons were to enjoy the right of explaining it, such a method would ever be found to preclude all agreement, on the subject of religion, and would lead to every species of difference and dis-

sention on the most important of all concerns; that by allowing, without any foundation whatever, those pretended inspirations, besides the inconveniences already specified, a door would be opened to the wildest fanaticism.

The conference had hitherto been conducted with great temper; and Beza, who valued himself much on a spirit of moderation, and who had always blamed heat and asperity in religious disputes, had certainly conferred with Francis with decorum and politeness; when the latter, in order fully to convince his adversary, by an example drawn from the conduct of the Calvinists themselves, of the inconveniences which he had specified, thought proper to add a historical anecdote, which many persons then living had heard from the mouth of Emmanuel Philibert, the Duke of Savoy. This Prince, said Francis, used to relate, that he had assisted at the conference of Cormasse;* that many ministers had made their appearance in that place, and that none of the leaders of the party were absent; that the leading subject of their deliberations was to produce a confession of faith; but that not being able to come to any agreement on the subject,

* A Calvinistic Synod held in 1527.

they had all left the assembly one after another, as no one would give up his own opinion, and their sentiments were so widely different on a subject of this importance; and that the conference was closed in this manner, without any other effect, than that of exposing the Calvinists to the ridicule of the Catholics. The Duke, Francis observed, who was a man of sense and ingenuity, remarked, that the Calvinists, so far from understanding the scripture, could not produce any agreement among their learned doctors; that their inspirations must be very contradictory, as these differences perpetually appeared; he added, that he never knew Protestants to agree in any single article, except the hatred, which they bore to the Catholic Church, while they lived in perfect harmony with other sects, whom they accused of error and impiety.

This historical trait roused the feelings of Beza, more than any thing that Francis had hitherto advanced. He appeared much disposed to question the veracity of the Duke of Savoy; but the fact was public and undeniable; the whole weight of his resentment therefore fell upon Francis, whom he treated with rudeness and insolence. But this truly humble man, who was not elevated with the advantage which he had ob-

tained over a person of the credit and reputation of Beza, and who had no other object in view, than to gain him to Christ, replied with so much meekness, that Beza was ashamed of the violence, into which he had been betrayed; he made a handsome apology, and the conference thus ended. Beza full of esteem for Francis, begged him to repeat his visit, and assured him, that he might do it with the utmost security.

Francis on his return to Thonon, wrote to the Pope, to give him an account of the state of the Catholic religion in Chablais, and of the conference which he had held by his order with Theodore Beza. In this letter he assures his Holiness, that Beza was not averse to Catholic sentiments; that the acknowledgment which he had made, that salvation was attainable in the Catholic Church, was a manifest proof of his dispositions; but that the reputation, which he had acquired among the Calvinists, and particularly the considerable establishment which he had obtained, were more powerful ties, to strengthen his connection with the party, than any reasons which he had adduced in defence of his religious opinions. He therefore entreated his Holiness to signify his pleasure on the subject; observing that the conversion of Beza was a work worthy

of his pontificate and of his paternal solicitude ; and that whatever offers might be made to Beza, the advantage of his return to the Catholic Church could not be too highly appreciated.

* The Pope answered this letter by a brief, dated the 29th of May, 1597, and the 6th year of his pontificate. He on this occasion congratulates Francis on the progress of the Catholic religion in Chablais, which he ascribes to his zeal ; he exhorts him to continue his apostolic labours and his solicitude for the conversion of Beza ; and he gives him full powers to treat with that reformer, and to make him the offers which will be mentioned in the proper place.

† To comply with the orders of his Holiness, Francis returned twice to Geneva, where he had two conferences with Beza ; the first without any witness ; the second in the presence of the president Favre, who was desirous of attending on the occasion. The conversation related to the necessity of good works ; to the co-operation of free will with grace, and many other very important points. Beza did not indeed yield in the

* Aug. Book III. Anon. Book I.

† Aug. of Sales. Book III.

contest; but he was so much overpowered by the superiority of his adversary, that in taking leave of Francis, with whose gentleness and meekness he had been enchanted, he pressed his hand, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said with a deep sigh: "If I am not in the right road, I beg of God daily, that in his infinite mercy, he would be pleased to direct my steps."

These last words of Beza determined Francis to return a fourth time to Geneva, in order to confer with him without witnesses. On visiting him he said, that he came not to dispute, but to speak to him with the utmost cordiality and friendship, on the most important affair, which could possibly interest him, his return to the Catholic Church; that he begged his permission to say with the utmost freedom, whatever he thought; and he desired him to attribute to the esteem which he had for him, and to his ardent desire of procuring his salvation, whatever zeal might urge him to advance, in order to induce him to embark in a concern, on which his eternal happiness, or eternal misery essentially depended.

Beza, who had begun to entertain a real esteem for Francis, and who could not but feel a tender

regard for a man, whose charms were irresistible, when he attempted to secure confidence, replied, that such conduct would give him pleasure; that he was perfectly aware of the sincerity of his intentions; that there was no person in the world, whom he would listen to with more pleasure, than to him; that he was not able to withhold from him either his esteem or his confidence; and that there was no one, whom he would more willingly oblige.

Francis having ascertained the good dispositions of Beza towards him, was determined to embrace the favourable moment; and resuming the history of the transactions which had taken place, he informed him, that whatever ardour he personally felt to promote his return to the Catholic Church, he had hitherto taken no step to forward this purpose, but by the express orders of the Pope; that he had about him the briefs, which would attest the truth of what he asserted;* that he had lately received one, which he had purposely brought for his inspection, by which his Holiness offered him an honourable retreat in any situation which he should choose, with a pension of four thousand crowns of gold; he like-

* Aug. of Sales. Book III.

wise agreed to take his effects and his books at his own valuation, and held out every possible security, which Beza might be disposed to require.

Such a proposal was to Beza, a subject of deep surprise; as his attention was naturally engaged with the extraordinary event, Francis proceeded to observe, that his Holiness did not think it equitable, to induce him to leave the advantages, which he enjoyed in the Calvinistic communion, without offering an equivalent, which would improve his situation; that the offers, which he was commissioned to make, were not intended to corrupt his integrity; that there existed a perfect conviction, that a man of his enlightened mind, did not make interest the ruling principle of his conduct, in an affair, in which the voice of conscience alone should be heard; that the offer was merely a temporal compensation, in order to provide for his support, which he might rationally look for, if the proposal had not been made; that at the same time, after such a decent provision for his maintenance should be ensured, human considerations should possess no farther influence; that he had now reached a period of life, when the concern for his salvation should engross his undivided attention; that the time of

mercy was rapidly passing, to make place for that of justice; that God spoke to him by his mouth, perhaps for the last time, and that the day would undoubtedly come, when he would feel a bitter, but a late and unavailing regret, if he should refuse to listen to the charitable suggestion; that in making such an overture, nothing extraordinary was proposed; that he was not asked to leave a religion, which he had received from his fathers, and had cherished from the earliest period of life; but to resume the profession of that, in which he had been born and educated, and which he had publicly recognised by his practice for a considerable part of his life; that he was fully aware of the motives which had induced him to quit it; that it was not possible to disguise or palliate them; that he might deceive men, perhaps himself, but that it was utterly impracticable to elude the search of the Almighty; that nothing could escape either His knowledge or His justice; and that it was a circumstance awfully dreadful to fall into His hands, after having so often rejected the offers of His grace; that he begged him to recollect his own avowed opinion, that salvation was attainable in the Catholic Church; that such an avowal should have a peculiar weight in influencing his determination to return to his ancient religion, since the Catholics, who were so numer-

ous, and displayed a countless list of virtuous and learned persons, could not say as much of the Calvinistic communion; that in an affair of such importance as eternal salvation, the safest side was always to be chosen; and that when a man had once taken a wrong step, to recede from the dangerous purpose, was highly honourable to the actor.

Whilst Francis was making this impressive address, the unfortunate Beza, who knew the truth, but could not excite in his mind a determination to follow it, with his eyes cast on the ground, preserved a profound silence; and felt all those secret reproaches, which a troubled conscience is so apt to inspire on such a trying occasion. But human respect, inveterate habits, the shame of retracting error, secret connections, of which a man at his period of life could never be suspected, prevented his determination, and secured his attachment to his party, though he was full well aware on what unsubstantial ground it stood.

Francis was waiting to see the result of this irresolution; and judging of the heart of Beza by his own, he hoped that he would at length be induced to follow the light of his conscience.

But how unavailing is the force of human reason, against a will seduced by evil, abandoned to its passions, labouring under the weight of inveterate habits, and held in captivity under the law of sin! To overcome such formidable obstacles, a grace of the highest kind is necessary, such as that which converted a St. Paul, or a St. Augustine; but favours of this distinguished nature are rarely bestowed on the authors of heresies and schisms. Beza experienced the truth of this with many others of the same class. Instead of the favourable answer, which Francis was waiting for, he replied, that, though he was fully satisfied that salvation was attainable in the Catholic Church, he did not despair of saving his soul in the Calvinistic communion. * Francis did not think it prudent to urge the matter farther at that time; he rather deemed it expedient to allow him leisure to reflect on the proposal which he had made; and he flattered himself with hopes of completing in another visit, what he had so happily begun.

But the favourable moment never recurred; his frequent visits had excited the strongest suspicions at Geneva; and he was informed, that, in

* Aug. of Sales. Book III.

the event of his return to that place, a resolution had been taken to dispatch him, and that Beza was watched with such suspicious vigilance, as prevented all access to his person. Some years afterwards this minister was seized with a serious illness; and feeling the approach of death, he desired to see Francis. This gratification being refused him, it is asserted that he repented of having left the Catholic Church, and that he retracted his former errors; but as he died in the hands of the Calvinists, it is difficult to ascertain with precise accuracy, a fact of this importance.

It is apparent, that libertinism, contributed not a little to the apostacy of Theodore Beza; indeed certain works, which he afterwards published, leave no doubt on the subject. * A fact recorded by the anonymous historian of St. Francis of Sales, furnishes a proof not less decisive of this circumstance. That author relates, that Henry IV, dispatched to Geneva, Deshayes, governor of Montargis, on some secret business; he there formed an acquaintance with Beza; and as they were both of a gay disposition, they soon were united by a very intimate friendship, and

* Anon. Book I.

made the depositaries of each other's secrets. Deshayes being one day engaged in very familiar conversation with Beza, thought proper to ask him what was the leading reason, which connected him so closely with the Calvinists. Beza made no answer; but having called into his presence a beautiful young girl, who lived with him, he said: "That is the principal reason which convinces me of the excellence of my religion." Deshayes was struck with surprise at this answer, as Beza was at that time extremely advanced in age, and might be supposed to have relinquished the weaknesses of his youth. After this it may safely be pronounced, that the Christian religion must have been changed in its great and peculiar characteristics from the first appearance of Calvin, if God had chosen such men to reform his Church, and to impart to them truths, unknown to so many Saints, so enlightened, so humble, so detached from the world, solely intent on Him, and on the hopes of a future life.

Francis was extremely affected at the death of Beza, as he had never despaired of his return to the Catholic Church. But God compensated this loss by the benediction, which He was pleased to bestow on his apostolic labours. Three ministers, and the first magistrate of Thonon,

were admitted to the Catholic communion; and their example was emulously followed by the inhabitants of Thonon; and as the number of the Catholics now exceeded that of the Calvinists, the first magistrate insisted, that the city should be considered as a Catholic city. In consequence of this idea, he himself wrote to the Pope in the name of the city, to request him to look upon the inhabitants as his children, and to pay him the homage due to the father of the faithful.

The success of the mission was not less considerable in the other parts of Chablais and the bailiwicks; whole parishes came in a body to abjure heresy; and the prospect of a general conversion was now so great, that the Bishop of Geneva considered it a duty to lend his co-operation to the work, by his presence and his apostolic solicitude. He accordingly repaired to Thonon, attended by a considerable number of learned Jesuits, Capuchins and other ecclesiastics, destined for the government of parishes, the establishment of which could be no longer delayed.

* This aid arrived at a seasonable time; for Francis being obliged to accompany the Bishop

* Aug. of Sales. Book III. Anon. Book I.

of Geneva, who was returning to Annecy, was there seized with illness in consequence of the fatigues which he had undergone for the conversion of Chablais. His indisposition was violent, but of short duration; and he was expected to return to Chablais when an alarm was raised, that a pestilential disorder was raging in Savoy, and that Annecy was afflicted with the infection. Nothing more was necessary to induce him to devote himself to the service of the unfortunate sufferers. On that subject he observed, that the first attention was to be given to those who were in the greatest want; that in Chablais there were persons more capable than himself; that they might now dispense with his services; that the same could not be said of those who were seized with the pestilence; that they were in danger of being abandoned by all the world; that the apprehension of this dreadful scourge made such extraordinary impressions on the mind, that parents were observed to abandon their children, children their parents, wives their husbands; and what was more melancholy, pastors were sometimes seen to retire from their flocks, who were left to perish without the sacraments, and were thus deprived of that assistance, which God had provided to facilitate the passage from time to eternity; that there are few occasions in which more heroic and

more disinterested charity may be exercised ; that for this reason such opportunities should be highly appreciated ; that it was a concern of no consequence to live, but a matter of the highest importance to die well.

The Bishop of Geneva, who knew how necessary the presence of Francis was in Chablais, could not observe this resolution which he had formed, without astonishment and a certain share of uneasiness ; and his authority alone was able to prevent the execution of his design. But Francis was not one of those bold and headstrong spirits, who can never relinquish their first conceptions, who proceed with invincible obstinacy in the path which they have once chosen for themselves, and who acknowledge neither superior authority nor subordination, when they have persuaded themselves to believe, that God calls them to the performance of functions, for which in fact they have no other vocation than their own will. A dangerous illusion this, which often spoils the fruit of the most holy enterprises.

Francis had too exalted a notion of the merit of obedience, not to yield to the authority of his Bishop, on an occasion, in which he could not expect to succeed without a particular vocation

of God. He represented to his superior with his usual modesty, the reasons which induced him to devote himself to the service of those infected with the pestilence; but that prelate had no sooner testified his disapprobation of the design, and his sincere conviction that God required him to return to Chablais, than he prepared for his departure, in order to resume those laborious functions, which had been interrupted by his illness.

A dispatch arrived at the same time, which obliged the Bishop of Geneva to return to Chablais. The information conveyed was, that the Duke of Savoy had passed the mountains, and was on his road to Thonon, to wait for the Cardinal of Medici, who was returning from France, whither he had been sent in quality of legate.

After ten years of civil and foreign wars, the Cardinal had brought to a conclusion the peace of Vervins. The Duke of Savoy had been included in the treaty; and the difference respecting the Marquisate of Salucca, had been referred to the arbitration of the Pope, who was to pronounce on the merits of the question within a year.*

* Prefix. history of Henry the Great. Third part.

The Cardinal of Medici, who was thoroughly acquainted with this affair, was well able to obtain a decision in favour of the Duke; and it was not doubted, that the judgment of the Pope, would be guided by the opinion of the legate. It was therefore a matter of the utmost importance to the Duke to secure his influence; and with this view he had left Turin to receive him at the entrance of his dominions. A greater honour he could not have bestowed on the Emperor, or on the King of France, if they had visited his capital.

The providence of God on Chablais was eminently displayed on this occasion. The road from France to Italy, was not through Thonon; no resolution had been adopted to pass by that town; indeed it would have been far the most circuitous way. But the pestilence, which has been mentioned, had spread in every other place through which it was possible to pass, and compelled the legate to take this winding direction. The Duke of Savoy was by consequence obliged to repair to this town to receive him. Nothing more advantageous could have taken place, to promote the general conversion of Chablais and the bailiwicks; and indeed the presence of the Duke and the legate, proved necessary to complete the

great work in the manner which we have to relate.

* The Duke who regulated his journey by that of the legate, travelled like him by easy stages, and frequently halted, that he might not be obliged to wait for him too long at Thonon. This delay afforded the Bishop of Geneva an opportunity of performing the devotion, called the forty hours' prayer, which was accomplished with much piety and magnificence. The report that the Duke and the legate were shortly expected, had drawn to Thonon a considerable number of persons of both religions; and the devotion just mentioned had been appointed for the purpose of giving general edification. At every hour of the day and of the night, sermons, controversial discussions, familiar instructions, catechism, meditation, public prayers, took their turn; the Catholics crowded in great numbers to church, with the Bishop of Geneva and Francis at their head, imploring the Almighty that he would be pleased to touch the hearts of His people, and bring back to the pale of his Church the remaining part of those, who had been separated by a fatal schism. To give more effect to

* Aug. of Sales. Book III. Anon. Book I.

the devotion, the most moving prayers, taken chiefly from the scripture, had been drawn up in the French language. Whilst a priest was engaged in reciting the prayers in an audible tone, the Bishop and the Clergy lay prostrate on the ground, and the people repeated at the close of every verse; "Lord hear us, O Lord graciously hear us." Thus day and night the supplications were continued; while persons selected for the purpose were employed in distributing considerable alms, in visiting the sick and the imprisoned, in labouring to adjust differences, and in reconciling those, whom a spirit of discord had disunited. All this was performed without any distinction of religion; these charities were extended equally to the Catholic and to the Calvinist.

So many humble and fervent prayers, such a series of charitable actions could not fail to produce the desired effect. The Father of mercies heard them, and bestowed his benediction; nine hundred persons, who were converted during these three days, filled the new church with joy, and afforded to Francis the greatest satisfaction he could possibly receive in his mortal career.

The prayers of forty hours were scarcely finished, when the Duke of Savoy arrived at Thonon. This event was to the Calvinists, a stroke of thunder. They had flattered themselves with a hope, that some accident would interrupt his journey; but seeing him on the spot, they had little doubt of the important consequences, which afterwards took place. The lofty mien and cold civility, with which he received their compliments, and the caresses with which he loaded the Catholics of every description, completed their conviction on the subject.

In the mean time the first concern of the Duke, was to furnish in a superb style, the town hall, in which the legate was to reside during his stay at Thonon; to raise triumphal arches in different parts, where he was to pass; to ornament the gates and public places, and to make every arrangement for a magnificent reception.* But what proved a subject of great edification was, that he himself undertook the decoration of the two churches of St. Hippolytus and St. Augustine. The most renowned painters of Italy, who attended him, were employed on the occasion;

* Aug. of Sales. Book III. Anon. Book I.

no ornament was spared that could tend to embellish the temple of God.

While he was waiting for the arrival of the legate, he gave orders that the public prayers of forty hours should be recommenced; he omitted nothing, which might add lustre to the ceremony, and was careful to remember, that his example would promote more effectually the conversion of his subjects, than any other measure which he could adopt, if he did not proceed in that path, which he held out to the observation of others. Nothing could be more edifying than his conduct, on this interesting occasion. He assisted with his whole court at the sermons and public prayers, with a degree of modesty and respect, that afforded general edification; after remaining at church a considerable part of the day, he returned in the night; he distributed with his own hands very great charities; he listened to the complaints of his subjects, and granted to them instantaneously that redress, which they had in vain expected from the regular judges. He treated the priests and the lowest ministers of the Church, with great distinction; but Francis was to him an object of peculiar regard; he had him very generally at his side, and appeared fully convinced that the honour which he had paid him,

would in the highest degree promote the interests of the Catholic religion. God rewarded the piety of this Prince, by gratifying the most ardent wishes of his heart; he was himself witness of an immense concourse of inhabitants from several parts of the barony of Faucigny, who came to abjure their errors; the parishes of Bellevaux and of Saint Sergues, also appeared at the same time, each to the number of three hundred persons. The Bishop of Geneva was unable to receive such a concourse; and it became necessary to appoint an increased number of clergymen and religious persons, in order to divide the labour. The Duke appeared astonished at the change, which had taken place in the dispositions of so large a portion of his subjects, as no means had been employed to promote the purpose, but religious instruction and good example. The courtiers admired their zeal; those who felt least the attractions of piety were softened to compunction; and as far as we are enabled to judge from external appearances, true devotion spread so rapidly in that court, that its effects were very generally observed in a profuse distribution of alms, in numberless instances of restitutions, and reconciliations, which took place, and in a visible reformation of manners, which appeared during the stay of the Duke at Thonon. So

true it is, that nothing contributes more effectually than the example of a sovereign, to inspire with sentiments of piety even those, who before never felt its impression! Justice obliges us however to observe, that the example of the Duke was not the sole cause of the change; the animated discourses and the activity of Francis, certainly produced a considerable effect; every one applied to him to direct his conscience; and the extreme mildness of his character, supported by his eminent piety, contributed no less to the reformation of the Catholic, than to the conversion of the Calvinist.

Affairs were in this situation, when the Duke received the news, that the legate had nearly reached the frontiers of France; and he instantly departed with his whole court to receive him at the entrance of his dominions. The legate and he arrived about the same time; but after the first salutations, the Duke returned to Thonon by a different road, from that which the legate pursued, in order to proceed again to meet him on his entrance into that town.

The following day, the last of September, in the year one thousand five hundred and ninety eight, the legate had proceeded to the distance

of about a league from Thonon, when the Bishop of Geneva, accompanied by many prelates of Savoy and Dauphiné, who had assembled to pay their respects to the legate, and attended by a concourse of his own clergy, advanced to meet his Eminence. The Duke of Savoy likewise departed a little time after, and received the legate at the distance of about half a league from Thonon; he accompanied him to the church of St. Hippolytus, where his Eminence descended, and spent a considerable time in prayer. The Duke desired to conduct him to his destined place of residence through the streets and public places, in which triumphal arches and musical entertainments had been prepared for the occasion; but the legate, who was a man of virtue, requested to walk after the blessed sacrament which was carried in procession; he added, that it appeared indispensably necessary, to make this public reparation to the holy sacrament, and proceed with it in a species of triumph through a town, from which, for the space of seventy years, it had been so shamefully banished. They therefore proceeded to the town-hall, agreeably to the suggestion of the legate.

His Eminence there received the complimentary congratulations of the most distinguished

persons of the town. The Duke, who never left him, having perceived that Francis, instead of shewing any earnestness to appear in public, was blended with the crowd, went himself to draw him from the surrounding concourse, and introduced him to the legate, in this memorable manner : *
“ This is the Apostle of my dominions ; to him, under God, are we indebted for the great success, which I have reported to your Eminence.” The legate advanced some steps to receive him ; Francis with bended knee, made an attempt to kiss the extremity of his robe ; but his Eminence refused to admit that act of humility ; he raised him up, and embraced him. Then turning to the Duke of Savoy, he told him, that independently of the information given by his Highness, he had been before apprised of his merit ; that he felt personally obliged to him for the infinite pains, which he had taken to draw these people to the Catholic Church ; that he should certainly report his achievements to the Pope, with that commendation, to which he was entitled ; and that though God alone could give him an adequate reward, he might expect every species of acknowledgment from his Holiness.

* Aug. of Sales. Book III.

The day after the arrival of the legate, the prayers of forty hours were resumed agreeably to the general wish; the supplication commenced by a procession of the blessed sacrament, which was conveyed under the triumphal arches, prepared for the reception of the legate, who marched after on foot, and swelled the train with his attendants. The Bishop of Geneva performed the ceremony. The legate followed the canopy, which was carried by the Duke, by Don Amé, the heir apparent, and the two ambassadors of Fribourg. The Calvinists, who knew nothing of Cardinals and Bishops, but from the satirical sallies and the frightful representations exhibited by their enemies, were seized with admiration at the modesty and piety displayed by the legate and the attending prelates.* A great number shewed unfeigned marks of sensibility on the occasion; and a sermon, which Francis preached on the real presence of the body and blood of Christ, in the Eucharist, so completed their conviction of the truth of the Catholic religion, that they requested to make their abjuration at the feet of the legate. It was now late and the ceremony had lasted a considerable time; he however received

them, and embraced them all with a paternal kindness, which won their hearts.

The Calvinistic ministers had before published in their seditious harangues to the people, that the legate and his attendants, would easily be discerned by an affected splendor, by luxury and effeminacy, to be the true ministers of Antichrist.* But the surprise was very general, when this same legate, labouring under the fatigue of a long journey, was observed to assist day and night at the sermons and public prayers; to devote his time to the reconciliation of the Calvinists, of whom he received a great number into the Church, during the continuance of the forty hours' prayer; to make to them the most solid and pathetic discourses; to distribute considerable alms among the poor of the town and those from the province, who had flocked to Thonon on the occasion; and to employ his influence with the Duke in favour of those who solicited protection. Those who were enabled to inspect his conduct closely, always remarked, that he was perpetually occupied in some useful pursuit, without devoting a single moment to the most innocent amusement.

* Aug. of Sales, Book III.

In vain did the malignity of the enemies of the Church lead them to misconstrue and defame the conduct of the legate. Justice was done to his character; and a small number only of violent Calvinists, persisted obstinately in asserting, that this display of piety exhibited by the legate and the Duke, originated rather in policy, than in a true zeal for religion.

In the mean time, Francis, who had calculated that the legate would make a longer stay, heard, with extreme concern, that he intended to depart, as soon as the forty hours' prayer should be concluded. He thought his presence and his interposition so advantageous to the re-establishment of the Catholic religion, that he determined to entreat him, in the name of the new Church of Chablais, to delay his departure, at least for some days. He accordingly requested for that purpose, a private audience; and having instantaneously obtained it, he employed every argument which his ingenuity could suggest, to retard the departure of the legate. The latter replied to him with great kindness, that his orders from the Pope to repair to Rome without delay, were so absolute, that he was unable to use his own discretion; that the winter which was approaching, obliged him to cross the Alps, before the snow

should render them impassable. He added, that he observed the Duke to be so well disposed to promote the re-establishment of the Catholic religion, that it could be no longer a matter of doubt, that he would employ the whole weight of his authority to accomplish the great work without any solicitation.

Francis observed in reply, that the intentions of the Duke were unquestionably of the purest kind; but that the same judgment could not be formed of his council; that when he was at Turin, he found considerable opposition from the counsellors to certain proposals, made by him, the accomplishment of which he judged indispensably necessary; that he was informed, that the ambassadors of the Swiss protestants and the deputies of Geneva, were shortly expected; that they were commissioned to make the warmest remonstrances, for the purpose of ensuring liberty of conscience to Chablais and the bailiwicks; and that possibly, should their claims be seconded by the unsound part of the council, they would be enabled to defeat the fairest intentions of the Duke.

The legate requested to have in writing, the propositions alluded to; they were the same which had been before made at Turin. Francis, who

had brought them with him, gave them into his hands. The legate read them; and having given them a deliberate attention, he observed to Francis at parting, that they might be pronounced to be rather strong measures; but that he agreed with him in thinking, that the execution of them was indispensably necessary; that he would propose them to the Duke as from himself; that he would recommend this affair to the Nuncio of his Holiness; and that he observed so many critical conjunctures, in which the authority of the Pope would be necessary, that probably he might forward the execution of his good purposes with more effect at Rome than at Thonon.

The legate departed on the following day, and was re-conducted with the same honours, which had attended his arrival. But he failed not to speak to the Duke, and to the Nuncio, agreeably to his promise made to Francis; and the success of the business evidently shewed the necessity of the precaution.

After the departure of the legate, the ambassadors of Fribourg, who arrived first, were admitted by the Duke to an audience. They complimented him in the name of the Canton, on the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in Cha-

blais, and exhorted him to complete an enterprise of so religious a nature, and so worthy of a great Prince.

The ambassadors of the Canton of Berne, and the deputies of Geneva, who had just reached Thonon, had afterwards an audience; they spoke with considerable force on the subject of liberty of conscience, and requested the Duke to favour them with a clear and positive answer, as they had precise orders from their governments to procure information concerning the real intentions of his Highness. The Duke replied, that he would not leave Thonon, without finally adjusting the concerns of religion; that he would immediately assemble his council, to give to the business the maturest consideration, and would acquaint them with the result. After the audience, the Duke entered the council, having requested Francis to attend.

He explained in few words, the subject of their deliberation; he expatiated on its importance, and assured the members of his council, that they would confer on him a real obligation, by delivering their sentiments with the utmost freedom; he declared to them, that he had not adopted any pre-conceived plan, but that his judgment should

be guided in the choice of expedients, by any measures, which they could shew to be calculated to promote the glory of God, and the general interests of his dominions.

* The sentiments of the counsellors were at first divided; but at length the majority came to an agreement, that liberty of conscience should be granted, and that the affairs of religion should be left nearly in the state, in which they then existed. In support of this opinion it was alleged, that the Duke could not forbid the public exercise of Calvinism in Chablais and the bailiwicks, without a manifest infraction of the treaty of Nion; that it was a matter of the utmost importance not to give to the Swiss and to the republic of Geneva, a precedent for violating the stipulations of that treaty; that they would carry their violence to the last extremity, in order to support the execution of the article, which ensured liberty of conscience; that there was great reason to apprehend, in the event of a rupture, that they might be assisted by the Calvinists of France, who were inured to war, and already shewed a manifest inclination to violate the peace; that their sovereign, Henry IV, who

* Aug. of Sales. Book III. Anon. Book I.

alone could prevent such a consequence, was too great a politician not to embrace the opportunity of being freed from a large portion of bold and turbulent spirits, who, subsisting solely by tumultuary violence, would sooner or later excite commotions in his kingdom; that there was reason to believe, that he would be less disposed to discountenance this aid, as he might always have an opportunity to disavow his connection with the party; that by such means he would place the Duke under the necessity of restoring to him the town of Berre in Provence, and the Marquisate of Salucca, agreeably to the treaty of Vervins; that it was necessary to secure in the first instance, the tranquillity of the state, before such important operations could be undertaken; that the treaty of Vervins, which was not executed with respect to the Duke, afforded great apprehensions from the probable junction of the French forces under so powerful a Prince as Henry IV.; that though the proposed plan should be carried into execution, it would be prudent to postpone it to a more seasonable occasion; that in the mean time the return of the Calvinists to the Catholic Church might be promoted by the same means which had hitherto been employed, and without any possible ground of complaint; that assuredly it would be a slow method of accomplishing

the purpose, but that it would have a more certain effect.

* These sentiments were directly opposite to the opinion of Francis. Accordingly, no sooner had the Duke made him a sign to deliver his opinion, than he spoke on the other side of the question, and represented with considerable energy and address, that the firmest support of States, is to be found in uniformity of belief; that a sect like that of the Calvinists, which constitutes individuals the supreme judges in religious affairs, was not calculated to enforce that respect and inviolable fidelity, which is due to sovereign authority; that the Calvinists were to be distinguished from all other sects, which had occasionally arisen in the Church; that the others, which had directed their attacks against some speculative points of faith, had still respected the fundamental truths of christianity; that they had not perverted the morality of the gospel, nor injured the Christian worship; that with some exceptions, they had even maintained a certain uniformity; that the Calvinists, more enterprising and audacious, had scarcely left any thing in the state in which they found it; that they had displayed

* Aug. of Sales *ibid.* . Anon. *ibid.*

their hostility against faith, morality, external worship, discipline, and the authority of the Church, and scarcely shewed more reverence for the power of sovereigns; that to be convinced of the truth of this statement, nothing more was necessary, than to take a view of their achievements in different countries of Europe, since the establishment of the sect; that they had wrested a part of the Low Countries from the hands of the king of Spain, and formed it into a republic; that in Scotland they had nearly annihilated the royal authority, and were labouring to promote the same object in England; that on a late occasion at Nantes, they had proposed such terms to the king of France, as amounted to the establishment of a republic in the heart of the kingdom; and that it was calculated, that their demands could not be rejected, without raising the flames of civil discord a second time; that without going so far in quest of examples, they had lately at Geneva revolted against their legitimate sovereign, had by their own authority raised a free and independent republic, and that the vestiges of their rebellion were still to be observed in Chablais; that after this undeniable statement, he was at a loss to discover the danger, which could be found in banishing Calvinism from the dominions of his Royal Highness; that if any

danger were to be apprehended from the result of their deliberations, it would arise from tolerating men whose principles were hostile to the established government; that a Catholic sovereign was to them peculiarly an object of suspicion; that they would ever look upon him as an enemy to their religion, and always ready to suppress it; that this distrust and jealousy terminated in hatred to the Prince, in secret cabals and leagues with the enemies of the country, and finally in open rebellion; that such consequences were more to be apprehended in the present conjuncture, if the Duke were to recede from the measures, which he had begun, as the Calvinists would publish to the world, that he durst not urge matters farther; that after such an event, he would possess no more authority in the province, than what they would be disposed to allow him; and that whenever he should judge it expedient to exert his sovereign authority, he would be threatened with the hostility of the Swiss and the republic of Geneva; that it became a measure of necessity at once to shew them, that they had to look for no resource but in the bounty of their Prince; that the more they depended on foreign interference, the less regard would they merit; and that instead of advancing their interest by such a step, they were more likely to accelerate their ruin.

He added that the treaty of Nion, concerning which such a clamour had been raised, by no means established Calvinism in Chablais; but that it allowed the Calvinists three ministers only, and this provisionally and by sufferance, till the Duke should make farther arrangements; that the republic of Geneva and the Swiss, were not so formidable, as to be enabled to dictate to the Duke the method of governing his own dominions; that the king of France stood in too much need of Rome, and was on too great terms of intimacy with that court, to suffer his subjects to take arms against a Catholic Prince, with a view of preventing the re-establishment of the Catholic religion, of which the Pope was the head; that after all that could be said, the grand object of sovereigns was to maintain themselves in mutual independence, and to preserve inviolate the right of disposing of their subjects, in the manner they judged most conducive to the interests of their States.

The art of this judicious speech consisted in consulting the prejudices of the Duke. He was a Prince of considerable merit, but jealously attached to his own authority; he could not suffer the least suspicion to be entertained, that he was either unable, or that he wanted spirit to display

it in its full extent. Accordingly there soon prevailed in the council, a strong impression, that Francis would succeed to the utmost extent of his wishes.

But this apostolic man, whose heart was ever full of that sincere piety, which shone in all his actions and in his conversations, and who had employed political reasons only in reply to others, who had spoken before him, now addressed his discourse to the Duke, and observed with much respect, that a Christian Prince ought, at least in those concerns, which involved the interests of heaven, to place some reliance on Divine Providence; that if Constantine, Theodosius, and so many other Princes, who had banished idolatry and heresy from their States, had always listened to the cold suggestions of policy, paganism and so many heresies, of which the names are now scarcely known, would still prevail in the world; that God was the support of thrones, when the Princes, who filled them, employed their influence in making Him reign in the hearts of their subjects; that he did not doubt, that to reward the zeal which he should display in re-establishing the Catholic religion, the Almighty would crown his reign with a long series of prosperity.

The Duke, who had listened to Francis with great attention, was so affected with his speech, that he instantly complied with the whole of his demand; he ordered the articles to be produced, of which mention has been made in the negotiation of Turin; and directed that they should be carried into immediate execution. The purport of them was, that the ministers should be banished from the dominions of the Duke of Savoy; that the Calvinists should be deprived of the places of honour and emolument they possessed, which should be given to the Catholics; that an exact search should be made for the revenues of the benefices, usurped by the Calvinists, and unjustly occupied by other persons without title, and without the sacerdotal character, in order that they might be employed for the reparation of churches, and the subsistence of pastors and Catholic missionaries; that a college under the management of the Jesuits should be founded at Thonon; and that in Chablais and the bailiwicks, no other religion but the Catholic, should be tolerated.

As these articles appeared rather of too strong a nature, to be executed at once, violent contests succeeded in the council; but the Duke, who remembered his promises to the legate, and who had formed a decided opinion on the subject,

gave orders, that they should be carried into effect without delay; and he desired this resolution to be immediately communicated to the ambassadors of the Swiss and to the deputies of Geneva.

A proceeding so peremptory, and so little expected, astonished without disconcerting the ambassadors; they demanded a second audience; and after having made the strongest remonstrances without effect, in order to maintain affairs in the situation, in which they then existed, they confined themselves to the treaty of Nion, and required, that agreeably to the stipulations of that convention, the Calvinists might be permitted to have three ministers in Chablais. But the Duke replied, that they well knew this regulation to be provisional; that notwithstanding, he would yield to their requisition, if they, on their side, would consent to admit into the Canton of Berne three Catholic Priests, whom he should appoint. This alternative, to which they could not bring any rational objection, appeared to them in the light of a harsh refusal; they accordingly took leave of the Duke, and departed on the following day, that they might not witness the scene, which was to take place to the disadvantage of their religion

* The following day, the Duke having published an order, that those, who professed the Calvinistic religion, should repair to the town hall, went himself in state, preceded by his guards, and followed by his whole court. A part of the regiment of Martinengues at the same time seized on the gates and public places; the rest formed a double line in the streets, which led to the town hall. These preparations, which indeed were calculated to raise astonishment, spread among the Calvinists all that terror which may easily be conceived; there were very few, who did not imagine, that the Duke intended to proceed to the utmost extremities, in order to oblige them to change their religion. But if terror and confusion prevailed among the people, the leaders of the party, who were detained in the town hall, were not less agitated with alarm.

The Duke having ordered silence to be proclaimed, observed to the assembled multitude, that though he might, in the first instance, have been justified in exerting the strong arm of sovereign power, to oblige them to return to the Catholic Church, he had however condescended to adopt only temperate and mild measures; that

* Aug. of Sales. Book III.

with this view, remonstrances and exhortations had for four years been unremittingly employed; that no possible method of winning the most obdurate heart had been left unattempted, to induce them to a voluntary compliance with a measure, which, in every point of view, was the most advantageous to themselves, and that he had himself both in public and in private, urged them to adopt the same conduct; that in truth, his efforts had been by no means unsuccessful; for he had the gratification of seeing the majority of his subjects in the province, reunited to the Catholic Church; but he now declared to them, that he would no longer suffer a small portion of rebels and of foes to sovereign authority, who remained deaf to the exhortations of the Church and of their Prince, to be restrained by a mistaken point of honour from following the example of the others, and to consign themselves to present and eternal misery; that he considered these hardened men as the enemies of God and of their sovereign; that they had been favoured with sufficient time, to deliberate on the conduct to be adopted; that now they were required openly to declare their sentiments; that those who had resolved to follow the religion of their Prince, were to pass to the right, and those who persisted in their obduracy, should proceed to the left.

The Duke having finished his harangue, the Catholics, who were present exhorted their friends in the most pressing terms to open their eyes, and not to ruin themselves by an unseasonable obstinacy, of which they would be the first to repent. Francis, who attended, and who knew the extent of the Duke's designs, was extremely earnest in his representations to these unfortunate men, with respect to the important choice, which they had to make. Nothing was to be seen but crowds passing from one side to the other; at length the greater number went to the right of the Duke; while the other party formed no inconsiderable proportion.

The Duke then resumed his discourse; and addressing himself to those on his right hand, he assured them, that he should ever consider them as his good and faithful subjects, and that they might expect any favour from the affectionate regard of their sovereign. Then turning to those, who had remained on his left hand, and looking at them with eyes sparkling with fire and indignation, he said: " You are the unfortunate men, who in my presence dare to proclaim yourselves the enemies of God and of your sovereign. Go, depart hence; I strip you of your employments and your dignities, and banish you for ever from my do-

minions. I would rather be deprived of all my subjects without exception, than have such persons as you to govern, who ever prove to me a source of continual distrust." At the same time, he made a signal to his guards, who drove them ignominiously from his presence.

In whatever light the severity of the Duke might appear, after mild means had been resorted to without effect, Francis was extremely affected at the extraordinary scene. The uncommon mildness of his disposition, did not permit him to witness the ignominious banishment of these unfortunate sufferers from the presence of their sovereign, and their departure for a melancholy exile, without entreating the Duke to allow him that day, in order to reclaim them to their duty.

On that subject he observed, that he knew the Calvinists well enough, to be able to assure his Royal Highness, that their attachment to their religion was not so great, as to induce them to abandon a certain establishment, in the hope of finding a casual and dependent support; that as they all were established in Chablais, very little invitation would induce them not to leave their property, and wander about among those of their party, without situations, without homes, exposed

to every species of privation; that thus, if his Highness would consent to his proposal, he hoped before the end of the day to make a considerable impression on those, who had displayed such apparent firmness.

The Duke who had resorted with much regret to the measures of severity, which have been described, allowed him to act as he pleased; and Francis had the happiness, before the close of the day, of persuading the greater number to comply with the wishes of the Prince. A very small proportion of those, who believed themselves possessed of greater firmness, than they afterwards displayed, abandoned Chablais, and retired to Nion, on the other side of the lake.

But it is more easy to undergo severe and immediate punishment, than to languish in sufferings of a less rigorous nature. The exiles of Chablais, who had flattered themselves with a hope, that the sight of their distress and their repeated solicitations would engage the Swiss and the citizens of Geneva, to take arms for the purpose of re-establishing Calvinism in Chablais, had no sooner perceived that there existed in those parts no intention of coming to a rupture with the Duke, and that they were considered as extremely bur-

densome, than they wrote to Francis, even before the departure of his Highness from Thonon, and desired him to procure their return and the restoration of their effects, which had been confiscated. Francis easily obtained these favours; the exiles returned, and were well received by the Prince.

Thus were the inhabitants of Chablais reunited in the profession of the same faith; and the Duke bestowed his whole care on settling affairs upon so secure a basis, that a change might be rendered altogether impracticable. With this view he placed in different situations very strong garrisons, to prevent the emissaries of Geneva from exciting commotions. He gave orders, that the parish churches should be rebuilt; he provided for the subsistence of the pastors and of a considerable number of able missionaries, who were to reside several years in the province. He allotted a foundation to establish the college of Jesuits at Thonon, of which mention has already been made. Finally, he omitted nothing, that could prevent the return of Calvinism into Chablais and the three bailiwicks.

But what rendered this enlightened Prince deserving of the highest commendation, was the regular conduct which he exhibited, as well as the

whole of his court, during the six weeks, which he spent at Thonon, and the great example of piety, which he gave. As he was convinced, that the example of a sovereign has more weight in producing conviction, than any actions however splendid, he was careful frequently to approach to the sacraments; he assisted at the sermons and public prayers, with a degree of assiduity and reverence, which softened the most obdurate hearts; and he distributed such abundant alms, that the whole province felt the effects of his charity, long after his departure.

When policy is supported by piety and religion, there is no object, which it may not accomplish. An instance of this has here been given in the peaceable re-establishment of the Catholic religion in Chablais; and it will be followed with many others, which will be recorded in the ensuing part of this history.

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

THE LIFE

OF

Saint Francis of Sales.

BOOK IV.

CONTENTS

OF THE

FOURTH BOOK.

TROUBLES in Italy, which oblige the Duke of Savoy to leave Chablais, and repass the Alps....The Bishop of Geneva forms the design of asking for St. Francis of Sales to be his coadjutor and successor....He proposes it to Francis; who declines the dignity with a degree of firmness, which has few examples; he at length consents to it, in order not to resist the will of God....He departs for Rome....Singular and dangerous adventure on the road, that gives great lustre to his virtue....He arrives at Rome, and is extremely well received by the Cardinals and by the Pope....His Holiness determines to examine him in person, in the presence of a great number of Cardinals and Prelates....He answers at his examination with such ability, as attracts the esteem of the court of Rome....Commendations given to him by the Pope....The Cardinals

Bellarmin, Baronius and Borghese, honour him with their friendship....He obtains by their influence all the bulls, which he wished for the perfect re-establishment of the Catholic Religion in Chablais....He returns to Turin by Loretto....He communicates to the Duke of Savoy, the bulls which he had obtained from the Pope....The military orders of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus oppose the execution of these briefs....St. Francis of Sales at length obtains from the Duke of Savoy all the necessary orders to carry them into effect....The war which Henry IV. is obliged to wage against the Duke of Savoy, for the restoration of the Marquisate of Salucca, raises great obstacles to the execution of his laudable designs....Great dangers to which the Catholic Religion is exposed during this war....Zeal, vigilance and firmness, which St. Francis of Sales displays on this occasion....He is taken prisoner, and released with honour....Peace is made, and his bulls are executed to their whole extent....He undertakes a journey to the court of France, to obtain from Henry IV. the re-establishment of the Catholic Religion in the bailiwick of Gex....Great difficulties, which he encounters in the execution of this project....He surmounts them by his prudence and his zeal....Great esteem in which he is held at Paris and at the court....He is accused of having undertaken the journey, to renew the conspiracy of the Marechal de Biron....Firmness and confidence in God, which he displays on this occasion....The manner in which he justifies himself in the mind of the king....This great sovereign redoubles his esteem for him....Advantageous offers, which he orders to be made to him, to detain him in France....Great examples which he gives of generosity and disinterestedness....He preaches at court and before the king with the greatest applause....Remarkable conversions which he makes at Paris and at court....He obtains from the king

the re-establishment of the Catholic Religion in the bailiwick of Gex...He departs in order to proceed to Annecy.... He is informed on the road of the death of the Bishop of Geneva....The very pious manner, in which he prepares himself for the ceremony of his consecration....Rules of life which he laid down for himself, and which he observed to the end of his days with inviolable fidelity.

THE LIFE
OF
SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES,
BISHOP AND PRINCE
OF GENEVA.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

* **W**HILE the transactions, which have been recorded, were taking place on this side of the Alps, the situation of the transalpine affairs appeared likely to lead to considerable commotions. All the princes of Italy, ready to commence hostilities against each other, were beginning to disturb the profound peace, which they had so long enjoyed, and which it is their peculiar interest to preserve.

† The cause of this general commotion, was the refusal of Clement VIII. to grant to Cesar of

* 1598.

† Prefix. History of Henry IV. Third part.

VOL. I.

A 2

Est, the investiture of Ferrara, and the reunion of that city to the Holy See. The princes, who were allied to the house of Est, espoused its cause. The Pope was not destitute of partisans. The flames of war, spread in every direction, and this posture of affairs obliged the Duke of Savoy, whose presence would have been, for some time longer indispensable in Chablais, to repass the Alps without delay. Italy was thus agitated, for a certain period of time with considerable commotions.

* But while affairs were returning to the former state of tranquillity, an event took place, which gave Francis a greater share of uneasiness, than he had ever experienced in any part of his life. He had quitted Chablais, as his presence was no longer necessary in that province, and had proceeded to Annecy, to give an account to the Bishop of Geneva of the manner in which the orders of the Duke and of his Lordship had been executed. He had no sooner performed this office with his usual exactness, than the prelate, who had long entertained the design of making him his coadjutor, and had ascertained the sentiments of the Duke of Savoy on the subject, now

1699

determined to make to him the proposal in due form.* Having therefore listened with attention to his report concerning the affairs of Chablais, he said in his turn, that he must be full well aware, that his great age and infirmities, which were daily growing upon him, precluded all possibility of action, at a period when his diocese, augmented by the addition of a province, demanded more activity and vigilance, than during any part of his administration; that he could no longer govern, without calling in assistance, and that he had looked up to him as a person proper to be his coadjutor and successor; that he had no doubt that his humility would lead him to suppose himself unworthy of the charge, but that such a disposition would be a direct proof of his merit and qualifications; that he would not make the offer to another but with hesitation and trembling; that, as to him, he was well assured, he would fill the episcopal chair with credit and worth; that he begged him to do such a service for his Bishop, or rather for Jesus Christ, who had chosen him for the purpose, and who spoke to him by the mouth of his prelate; and he conjured him to deliver his father in Christ, from that anxiety, which he felt, when the pressure of

* Aug. of Sales. Book IV. Anon. Book I.

age and infirmity deprived him of the power of satisfying the obligations of his exalted station.

It is easy to calculate, what must have been the surprise of a man, possessed of the humility of Francis. The multiplicity and confusion of his thoughts at first stopped his utterance; but at length resuming the usual calmness of his soul, he replied, that he was extremely obliged for the intended favour; that nothing could be added to the gratitude, which he felt for the obligation; that an offer was made to him, of a dignity, which all the world admire, which some covet, but which the greatest number do not sufficiently dread; that as to himself he was fully impressed with the persuasion, that *this burden* far from being an object of desire, would be *dreadful even to angels*; that he could not but observe an infinite disproportion between his own qualifications and the episcopal dignity; that he knew himself better than others could know him; that therefore he conjured his venerable prelate to look out for some other person, more worthy than himself of this exalted dignity.

The Bishop of Geneva, who had expected this refusal, was likewise prepared with a proper answer. He accordingly replied, that as any man

would be guilty of rashness, in believing himself possessed of virtue enough to engage in a ministry so holy as the episcopacy, he agreed with him that it would ever be the safest plan to decline the dignity; but that he ought to allow on the other side, that there would be a great degree of censurable obstinacy in persisting in a refusal, when there is a well founded reason to suppose, that God designs to place a person in such a situation; that in this instance he could not regulate his conduct by a better model than that of Moses himself, the holy leader of the people of God, who at first declined so great a commission, but afterwards accepted it; that the refusal proceeded from his humility, and the subsequent acceptance from his submission to the orders of God; that unquestionably there would be presumption in engaging without fear in an employment attended with such difficulties; but there would be pride in refusing to obey the orders of God, who called him to perform the function; that in consideration of his weakness on one side he declined the employment in question; but that on the other, with full reliance on the Almighty power of Him, who commanded him to take it, he should submit to the arduous task; that all the Saints had ever followed this conduct, and that he would expose himself to take a very wrong

direction, if he should venture to deviate from their example; that he approved of his conduct in not presenting himself for the purpose, in not soliciting the dignity, in even declining it in the first instance; but that he could not persist in his refusal, without thwarting the call of God; that to convince him fully of the truth of this assertion, he felt himself obliged to inform him, that he had not determined upon this choice, but after the coolest consultation with all the most able and virtuous persons, within the circle of his acquaintance; that he had often consulted God himself, and that he had never done it, without feeling himself confirmed and invigorated in his purpose;* that the clergy and the people desired to have him for their pastor; that his sovereign wished it with extreme ardour; that after this, there surely could not remain a shadow of doubt concerning the will of God on the subject, and that he was conscientiously obliged to yield to so many marks of a Divine vocation.

Francis replied, that with all the light which his Lordship possessed on the importance of the episcopal dignity, it could not be a matter of doubt, that his venerable father attributed to him

* Aug. of Sales. Book IV.

every good quality, which can enable a Bishop to attain salvation in so sublime a state; but that as to his own opinion, he was convinced of the contrary; that he perceived clearly, that he possessed not one of those qualities necessary to form the character of a good Bishop; and though some of the requisite endowments might be ascribed to him, he should ever feel it a duty to decline the exalted charge; that having embraced the ecclesiastical state, he in truth considered himself obliged to labour for the salvation of his neighbour, but that there existed a still greater obligation, not to form any engagement, which could obstruct his own; that we had been doomed to witness but too many examples of those, who having appeared as distinguished models of virtue, in the obscurity of private life, had afterwards been raised to the first dignities of the Church, and had been suddenly transformed into other men; that becoming men with men, they had abandoned themselves to the vanity of honours and of worldly riches; that these awful examples impressed him with terror, and that hence he could not help drawing an inevitable conclusion, that the temptations, which are in a manner annexed to these great dignities, are of a dreadful description, since they thus shake the strongest

goals, as the high winds sometimes blow down the firmest buildings.

"However," replied the Bishop, "there is an situation in the Church, which has produced more Saints, than the episcopal station; we must therefore conclude, either that you exaggerate the dangers, which are there to be found, or that God bestows graces on those, whom he calls to it, which are powerful enough to surmount the existing difficulties."

Francis replied, that the number of those, who had lost themselves in the episcopal station was greater than that of the others; that he could not overcome the alarms, which these terrible examples inspired; and that he conjured him by the friendship, with which he had always honoured him, to think no more of the subject, but to leave to Divine Providence the care of providing his successor.

* The Bishop did not think it prudent to urge the matter farther at that time; he desired him only to consider the subject more coolly, and to

* Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

recommend the whole business to God, as he himself was going to pray, in order that the Divine will might be made known. He however admired his profound humility, and the great difference between the Spirit of God and that of the world; and he wished more ardently to overcome his modesty, in proportion as it appeared invincible. He spoke on the subject to all those, whom he knew to possess any ascendant over the mind of the humble priest. They spared no pains to induce him to comply with the wishes of his Bishop. But so unsuccessful were their endeavours, that they soon found, that he had retired to the Castle of Sales, to avoid their solicitations.

* The Bishop of Geneva followed him thither; and uniting his solicitations to those of the Count and Countess of Sales, he made in conjunction with them the most powerful efforts to overcome his resolution. Those who are possessed of the mild dispositions of Francis, are generally not the most firm in their purposes; the condescension with which they are accustomed to treat others, deprives them almost of the power of refusal, when the object of the request is in their own hands, and there appears no harm in their com-

* Aug. of Sales.

pliancy. The Bishop of Geneva, the Count, and Countess of Sales, were the three persons in the world for whom Francis entertained the highest sentiments of respect and deference; but he honoured his God more than his most intimate friends; and impressed with His fear and His love, he was incapable, for any consideration whatever, to expose himself to the least danger of offending Him. Besides as the extreme mildness which formed the leading feature of his character, was less constitutional, than the effect of virtue, he was by no means destitute of a considerable share of firmness. Many instances of this have already been recorded, and many others may be remarked in the following parts of this history. In vain therefore did the Bishop of Geneva have recourse to the Count and Countess of Sales to oblige him to accept of the coadjutorship of Geneva; Francis, convinced that this dignity was far above his strength and his virtue, continued to decline it with unshaken firmness.

At length the Bishop, who was determined to bring this affair to a successful close, applied to the Duke of Savoy, and requested him to issue a writ, appointing Francis his coadjutor. This was obtained without difficulty; the Duke had already destined him to fill that See, in the event

of the demise of the Bishop. The good prelate, having received this instrument, which was necessary to the execution of his design, sent it to him by a clergyman of considerable merit, for whom Francis entertained a high esteem. He ordered him at the same time to induce Francis to accept it; and if he should fail in his solicitations, to command his acceptance, under pain of disobedience.

The clergyman acquitted himself of the commission, with the spirit of a man, who was determined to succeed; he employed argument, the authority of the fathers, and the examples of the Saints, to enforce his submission. Francis alleged his want of capacity and of virtue requisite for the charge; when his adviser told him that he had a positive order from the Bishop, to command his acceptance of the writ, under pain of disobedience; and he conjured him to yield at length to such visible and convincing marks of a Divine vocation.

* At these words, his extreme repugnance was overpowered by the authority of the Church and even of Christ himself, with which he knew his

* Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

Bishop to be invested; he therefore thought all farther resistance to be fruitless; but before he gave his final consent, he considered it a duty to consult God in prayer. He went to the Church, and lay prostrate before the holy sacrament; here he spent a considerable time, shedding a torrent of tears. It would be difficult to describe the trouble and agitation of his soul, prepared as he was at one moment to give his consent, and then alarmed by the apprehension of dangers, to which he was afraid his virtue might yield. At length God restored him to his former tranquillity; and considering this peace of mind as a proof that it was required of him to submit, he returned to the clergyman, and commissioned him to tell the Bishop of Geneva, that had his own judgment been followed, he should have filled the last place in the house of the Lord; that he had been in a manner forced to accept the prebostship of Geneva; that this dignity was but too far above his slender share of virtue, without being constrained to accept a higher station, of which consequently he was more unworthy; that he yielded, however, on this occasion, not to man, but to God himself, with whose authority his Bishop was invested; and that he protested, that from Him alone he received this dignity; that he begged the Almighty to pardon his spiritual father for the

choice which he had made of so unworthy a subject, and, as to himself, not to impute to him, the faults, which his incapacity would doubtless occasion in so sublime and arduous an employment.

But the Bishop was so far from entertaining any apprehensions of this nature, that, on receiving the news of his acceptance, he publicly said: "that he had never done any good in his life but by his choice of Francis of Sales for his successor." It would be difficult to describe the public joy, when it was known, that this truly apostolic man was named coadjutor of Geneva. The transactions in Chablais had acquired him so much esteem, and the extreme mildness of his character had conciliated so many friends, that the nomination of any other to succeed to the See of Geneva, would have disappointed the expectations of the public. It may safely be pronounced; that a prelate of his distinguished merit, and of his eminent sanctity, was wanting to support the cause of the Catholic religion, which had so lately been re-established in that quarter. And indeed no sooner was it known at Geneva, that Francis was named to succeed to the Bishopric, than all hopes were lost of re-establishing Calvinism in Chablais.

But the sentiments of Francis were very different from those of the public. He had no sooner given his consent, than he was overwhelmed with the deepest affliction, which he had ever experienced in his whole life. Incessantly was he engaged in considering the new situation in which he was going to embark; and though it would have been impossible to disengage himself from his promise, the dangers appeared to him not less imminent. He seemed to himself to be at the point of being exposed to the horrors of a boisterous sea, in which he foresaw a thousand dangers of shipwreck, and in which he feared others, which he was unable to foresee; and in the bitterness of his heart, he was sometimes insensibly led to exclaim with a loud voice: *Save us, O Lord, we are perishing.* Those who went to offer their congratulations, were astonished to witness his deep affliction; and as they ventured to express their surprise, he said, with much feeling: "Alas! it was assuredly enough to have to answer for my own soul, without undertaking the charge of so many others, of whom God will demand of me so terrible an account."* At length the lively apprehension of the dangers, to which he believed he was to be exposed, produced such a powerful

* Aug. of Sales, *ibid.*

effect, that he entirely lost all repose; want of rest heated his blood; and occasioned a violent fever, the strength of which, increased by the trouble and agitation of his mind, soon brought his life into imminent danger.

The Countess of Sales, who loved him with the most tender affection, was inconsolable at the thought of having contributed, as she imagined, to obtain that fatal consent, which was now likely to cost him his life. All his friends were not less afflicted at the unexpected calamity. Such fair hopes had been formed of a choice, in which the hand of God so visibly appeared, that no consolation could alleviate a loss which seemed irreparable.

Francis on the contrary, derived comfort from that circumstance, which excited the sorrow of his friends. The peace of his soul increased with the violence of his disorder; and his confidence in God was never greater, than when all hopes of his life had vanished.

But God, who had destined him for great things, was graciously pleased to prolong a life, which was to prove so holy and so useful to his Church. The violence of his disorder now began

to abate; and being naturally of a robust constitution, he soon regained his usual strength. The first use, which he made of returning health, was to repair to Annecy, to wait on the Bishop of Geneva, who was himself extremely indisposed, in consequence of the affliction occasioned by the danger, that threatened the life of Francis. His arrival contributed more than any medical advice, to restore the aged prelate to complete health. Francis no sooner observed him to be in a situation to listen to his complaints, than he addressed him in the most feeling manner. He told him, that he had always looked up to him, as his father and his protector; that notwithstanding, he had experienced from him more real injury, than the united efforts of all his enemies were able to inflict; that his venerable Bishop had overwhelmed him with the weight of his authority, that he had offered real violence, and had forced him to give a reluctant consent to a thing, for which he felt the greatest possible repugnance, and of which he must well know him to be unworthy; that if he had not thought it a duty, to shew compassion to his weakness, he at least should have been restrained by the view of the dreadful account, which he would have to give for having selected a subject so unworthy of the episcopal charge. He observed to him, that there was yet time to

repair the fault; and he conjured him with the most artless sincerity and tenderness to recall the writ, and to allow him to retract the consent, which he had so reluctantly given.

The venerable old Bishop answered his complaints only by embracing him, and adding his exhortations to place all his confidence in God, who having called him to the episcopal charge, in a manner, which left no doubt respecting the divine will, would not refuse the graces necessary to form a holy prelate. He urged him to make up his mind at once on the subject; observing, that it is unquestionably true, that we can do nothing of ourselves, but that we can do every thing in Him, who strengthens us. He added, that so far from recalling the writ, and allowing him to retract his consent, he had informed the Pope of the choice which had been made; that he had no doubt of his approbation; and he requested him to make the earliest arrangements, to depart for Rome, in order to complete this affair.

Thus Francis unable to succeed in his wishes, yielded to the will of God, whom he believed to speak by the mouth of his Bishop. He departed some days after; but the Bishop of Geneva, who apprehended that he might obtain from the Pope,

a release from the charge, which he so much dreaded, desired that he might be accompanied by his own nephew, who was a Canon of Geneva, and his Vicar General. And here the disinterestedness of the uncle and of the nephew cannot be too much admired. It is certain, that the Bishop of Geneva might have chosen his nephew to succeed him; and as he was a man of considerable merit, and had governed the diocese under his uncle, for a long period, with great success, the Duke of Savoy and the Pope would not have objected to the nomination. But on this important occasion, he consulted not the suggestions of flesh and blood; and knowing Francis to be a man of superior merit, he without hesitation gave him the preference. The nephew on his side had virtue enough, not only to refrain from all complaint; but to undertake the task of making those solicitations, which were to ensure the appointment of Francis as his superior, when he himself might have obtained the situation.

They were both well aware, that in the arrangement of worldly employments and places of trust, regard may be had to consanguinity and family alliance; but that in filling an office, which is of divine appointment, and of a nature altogether divine, God alone and the qualities

which He demands, are to be the subjects of consideration; that those only are to be selected for that sublime station, whom it is probable He has chosen, the humble and the charitable; those who are distinguished for piety animated by knowledge, and for knowledge enlightened by piety; those who display in their conduct firm and undaunted courage, and particularly an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls; since without this latter quality, all the other virtues, which form the character of a prelate, are lifeless and inanimate. It is by these marks, we are to distinguish a divine vocation, and to discover those subjects, whom God has destined for the episcopal charge. This was the criterion, which guided the judgment of the Bishop of Geneva, and determined him to prefer Francis to his own nephew; a truly Christian and disinterested conduct, which cannot be too highly applauded, or too faithfully copied.

But while the venerable Bishop, filled with that holy joy, which is invariably felt by those, who have sought purely the interests of God, was peaceably waiting for the successful issue of the negotiations of his nephew, respecting the nomination of the coadjutor, Francis having passed the Alps, and paid his respects to his sovereign, was pursuing his journey to Rome. The roads

were rendered extremely incommodious by a continual fall of rain at the end of winter. That circumstance gave occasion to an adventure, in which the virtue of Francis appeared so conspicuous, that the incident merits a place in this history.

* A little before he arrived at a town in Italy, which is not named by the historians of his life, his horse stumbled, and threw him into a mire, from which he was extricated in so unpleasant a situation, that he was obliged to hasten to the first inn to change his dress. As he had no other suit of clothes but that which he wore, a French gentleman whom he had met on the road, and with whom he had been extremely sociable, offered him a black velvet dress, and engaged him to make use of it, till his own should be cleaned and dried. That attention to decorum, which he invariably shewed, permitted him not to appear in public in that attire; he accordingly remained alone, while his companions were amusing themselves in the town. At the same time there arrived at the inn, a lady handsome in her person, and extremely modest in her mien. The propriety of her behaviour imposed on Francis, as she was deceived by his velvet dress; she mistook him for a gentleman of the world; he vainly imagined her

* Aug. of Sales. Book IV.

to be a virtuous woman. Francis was at that period in the flower of his years; and might be considered as one of the handsomest men of his time. A conversation gradually took place; it turned at first on indifferent subjects; but the lady imagining she had no time to lose, soon changed the topics which they had been discussing, and spoke in so licentious a strain, that Francis was struck with astonishment, to see such an air of modesty united with such loose and indecent conversation. He replied in a manner, calculated to produce remorse; but she was one of those, of whom the scripture says, that they have made to themselves the front of a courtesan, and have learnt never to blush; she turned into ridicule whatever he said to reclaim her, and continued her licentious conversation. Francis was not a little embarrassed; he wished on one side to spare the reputation of this lady; on the other, the occasion was too dangerous to allow him to remain in her company. The plan which he adopted was to make his bow and retire; but the lady ran after him, and stopped him at the door, at the moment, when one of the servants of Francis was entering the room. The servant remarked the conduct of the lady with some surprise; and her embarrassment gave him a very bad opinion of her character. He was going to ex-

press his sentiments to her, when Francis, with a presence of mind which never left him, prevented him, by desiring that he would conduct this lady to her room; for that she had mistaken for her own, the apartment which had been assigned to him. The servant conceived no better opinion of her on that account, and could not help relating the adventure to the French gentleman, who has been mentioned.

When they had resumed their journey, this gentleman spoke to Francis on the subject, and told him, that the effrontery of this woman had excited his surprise in a very great degree, as she had the appearance of a person of quality; and as her modesty had at first impressed him with sentiments of respect. Francis charitably observed, that perhaps she was what her appearance seemed to indicate; but that in life, there are certain evil hours, when poor human beings are not always master of their own motions; and that God sometimes permits these accidents, to make us sensible of our weakness, to teach us a salutary distrust of ourselves, and to oblige us to have recourse to the fountain of all goodness.

He added, that it was an unquestionable truth, that the company of women must ever be consi-

dered as extremely dangerous, particularly for young people, but that he was convinced, that the company which requires the most vigilant precaution was that of virtuous women; that with a share of the fear of God, and a tender regard for reputation, men generally avoid the company of women whose characters are indifferent, or whose conduct is disapproved in the world; that the acquaintance of devout women excites less precaution; that a connection with them is easily formed, because no bad consequences are apprehended, and the modesty of their deportment naturally commands esteem; that notwithstanding, it becomes one of the most refined artifices of self love; that men easily pass from the admiration of the virtue, to an affection for the party; that the transition is so insensible, that, as the heart receives no new impression, it easily mistakes the growing affection, for the virtuous attachment to which it has been habituated; that thus a connection is formed, which is only perceived, when there exists not fortitude enough to dissolve it; that the same observation may be applied to the attachment, which devout women have for virtuous men; that hence arise, those ridiculous and extravagant instances of inordinate affections which are sometimes exhibited; and that it may be said with St. Paul, that having begun by the

spirit, they tend with the flesh; that he was persuaded that such connections seldom prove criminal, and that he did not recollect a single instance of the kind; but that they must ever be subjects of distrust, vigilance and precaution; that God is more jealous of the heart than of the body, and that though persons may not be subject to shameful crimes, they may not more on that account belong to him.*

The travellers were engaged in this conversation, till they reached Rome, which was not far distant from the place they had left. As Francis had no time to lose, he immediately waited on the Cardinal of Medici, whom he had known at Thonon. This prince had conceived the most exalted esteem for his merit and piety; and it is well known that after his election to fill the Pontifical chair, he intended to make him a Cardinal; but surviving his election only twenty seven days, he was unable to execute that good purpose, as well as many other laudable designs which he had formed. The Cardinal listened with the utmost pleasure to the account of the transactions, which had taken place in Chablais, from the time of his departure from Thonon; he examined with atten-

* Aug. of Sales. Book IV. Anon. Book I.

tion the different memorials, which Francis was commissioned to present to his Holiness, and the petitions, which he had to make, relative to the complete re-establishment of the Catholic religion in Chablais; he promised to support them with all his influence, and engaged to conduct him to have an audience from the Pope.

The Pope, who knew him by reputation, and had addressed to him several briefs, received him in the most gracious manner, bestowed on him the highest commendations, conversed with him often in private, and complied with the whole extent of his demands. But as he observed, that Francis said nothing about the coadjutorship of Geneva, concerning which the nephew of the Bishop had spoken on delivering his uncle's letters, after admiring his profound humility, united with such distinguished merit, he opened the business himself, and told him, that he approved the choice, which had been made of him to fill that station. Francis replied, that he was not commissioned to transact that business; that had he been empowered to speak of it to his Holiness, he should have embraced the opportunity for the purpose of entreating, that he might be released from an engagement so much above his capacity, and to which he had been, in some mea-

sure, constrained to give a reluctant consent. The Pope informed him, that this business was completely adjusted, and that he had only to hold himself in readiness to undergo his examination, at which he himself should preside within three days.

Francis was surprised at this requisition, as he knew that the Bishops of Savoy and those of France, were never subjected to an examination. Accordingly without making any reply to the Pope on that subject, he repaired to the Count of Verue, the ambassador of his sovereign, and observed to him, that it was his concern to prevent any innovation on his account. The Count immediately requested an audience; but the Pope previously satisfied him, by saying, that it was not his wish to subject to an examination any Bishops named by the Duke of Savoy; that his present plan with respect to Francis, arose merely from his personal desire of witnessing the capacity of a man, concerning whom such advantageous accounts had been circulated. This declaration satisfied the ambassador, and Francis prepared for his examination; but it was at the feet of the crucifix. There in profound recollection, he begged of God with much fervour, that if He did not call him to the episcopal charge, He

would be pleased to make his ignorance appear, and to fill him with confusion in the presence of his viceregent.

On the day fixed for the examination, he repaired to the appointed place. The Pope came soon after, accompanied by the Cardinal Baronius, by seven other Cardinals, by a great number of Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Generals of orders, and celebrated Doctors; and among others by the celebrated Bellarmine, who was afterwards a Cardinal.

* The Pope, who was well skilled in theology, began himself the examination, which was afterwards continued by the Cardinals, the Bishops and the Doctors. Thirty-five questions of the sublimest part of theology were proposed; and Francis replied to each with so much solidity, precision and modesty, that the Pope enchanted with his display of talent, rose from his seat, and tenderly embracing him, repeated to him these words of the scripture. † *Drink, my son out of thy own cistern, and the streams of thy own well; let thy fountains be conveyed abroad, and in the*

* Aug. of Sales. Book IV. Anon. Book I.

† Prov. c. 5.

streets divide thy waters. He afterwards declared him coadjutor and successor to the Bishop of Geneva, named him Bishop of Nicopolis, and gave directions, that his bulls should be prepared. After the example of the Pope, the Cardinals and the Prelates gave him great marks of esteem, and vied with each other in bestowing the highest terms of commendation. Thus this humble man, who had begged of God, to fill him with confusion, if he were not called to the episcopal charge, returned crowned with glory, and obtained the general esteem of the court of Rome, the most enlightened in the world, and the most difficult to deceive.

A Spanish clergyman, who had been named to a Bishopric, met with a very different fate; and the circumstance is too remarkable to be omitted. He was to be examined with Francis, and had repaired with him to the place, where the examination was to be held. He was by no means destitute of virtue or learning; and he had reason to believe, that he should acquit himself with honour. However, the presence of the Pope, of the Cardinals and the Prelates made such an impression on him, that struck with a sudden and violent fear, he fell into a swoon. In this situation, he was conveyed to his lodgings;

every possible remedy to recover him was employed. The Pope even sent his own physicians to administer relief; and directed, that assurances should be given him, that his bulls should be issued without any previous examination. He died the same day without any other apparent disorder, than the violent effect, which fear had produced. This accident, which took place at the moment that the examination of Francis was commencing, was fully sufficient to disconcert his resolution. But God, who is ever the support of the humble, gave him courage; and his firmness and presence of mind was a subject of greater admiration, as it was difficult to guard against the effects of so singular an adventure.

The affairs of Chablais, which had formed the leading motive of the journey of Francis to Rome, did not so completely engross his attention, as to prevent him from frequenting the society of those friends, whom his reputation had acquired. He certainly did not neglect the dispatch of business; but as every thing is conducted at Rome with the most deliberate coolness, it is vain to solicit the hasty execution of any affair, where a solemn slowness in all proceedings is perpetually observed. However as the Pope had approved of all his memorials, had complied with all his requests, and

as he had no doubt of the successful issue of his journey, he waited with great tranquillity for the time of his departure. He often visited the Cardinal of Medici, whose esteem for him daily increased. The Cardinal Borghese, who was afterwards Pope, under the denomination of Paul V. contracted with him a great intimacy, and contributed more than any other person, to facilitate the issue of the necessary bulls. He became likewise very much connected with the Cardinal Baronius; this learned man frequently took him in various excursions in his carriage, in order to enjoy at leisure his conversation, and made him a present of his Ecclesiastical Annals. Bellarmine the Jesuit, who united with the most eminent piety, a share of knowledge exquisitely profound, frequently paid him a visit. Finally all those at Rome, whom piety and learning rendered eminent, honoured him with their friendship. But he met with no one more according to his own heart, than the Father Juvenal Ancina, at that time a priest of the oratorians, and afterwards Bishop of Salicetta; the similarity of their talents and dispositions first brought them together, and their intimacy ended only with their lives. Francis often mentions him in his letters, as a Prelate distinguished by his knowledge and virtue, by his zeal and charity, who resided with his

flock as a father with his children, and completely possessed their affections.

Whatever charms Francis might have found in the conversation of these great men, his zeal for the Catholic religion urged him continually to hasten his departure for Chablais. This ardent desire he testified to his friends at Rome, who by earnest solicitations at length obtained all his necessary briefs, and enabled him to take leave of his Holiness. The Pope at parting gave him innumerable marks of esteem; and charged him to apply to himself personally, either for his own business, or for any concern, in which his Pontifical authority might be employed to his advantage.

Francis replied, that without looking much for opportunities of applying to the Father of the faithful, he had a favour to ask of his Holiness before his departure; that the church of Geneva was in the enjoyment of privileges, which appeared to him to be too burdensome to the people; that of such a nature was that of inheriting the effects of those who died intestate; that like slaves, the people were forbidden to make a will, and to dispose of the smallest part of their property in favour of their near relations, who often

were in a state of indigence, and stood more in need of relief than the Bishop of Geneva; that of the same description was the privilege of obliging the inhabitants of certain towns, to watch during the night on the banks of the marshes, in order to prevent the croaking of the frogs from disturbing the repose of his Lordship. He added, that these privileges were unworthy of a Bishop, who should ever labour to prove the father of his people, without exacting from them those menial services, which exhibited rather the appearance of paganism, than the liberty of the Christian Church; that since the Holy Father had been pleased to name him coadjutor and successor of the Bishop of Geneva, he conjured his Holiness to be allowed to relinquish these claims, if the day should come, when on succeeding to the Bishop, he should think, that they might be resigned with propriety. The Pope admired the charity and disinterestedness of Francis; he permitted him to act in that affair, as he should think proper, and dismissed him with reiterated assurances of his friendship and protection.

He departed from Rome some days after; and it was remarked, that he had never spoken to the Pope or to the Cardinals, on his own personal concerns, though they would have felt much

pleasure in obliging him; and that instead of soliciting the bulls for the coadjutorship of Geneva, he had so completely abandoned them to Providence, that, had not the nephew of the Bishop, who accompanied him, taken care, to have them prepared, he would have returned to Annecy without them.* Francis returned by Loretto; but he remained there only long enough to satisfy his devotion. He then repaired with great expedition to Turin, to present to the Duke of Savoy, the bulls which he had obtained from his Holiness, and to request, that they might be carried into immediate execution. As he had acted by the orders of his sovereign, agreeably to the plans approved by him, before his departure from Thonon, he had reason to suppose, that the Duke, who considered the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in Chablais as his own work, and as the most glorious event of his reign, would give every possible facility to the execution of these briefs. But it is not at the present period of the world only, that we are doomed to see private interest placed in opposition to the general good. The two military orders of St. Maurice and of St. Lazarus, of which the Dukes of Savoy are the Grand Masters, strenuously opposed the

* Aug. of Sales. Book IV.

designs of Francis; and this great man saw himself reduced to the unpleasant dilemma either of relinquishing a project, on the execution of which the preservation of the Catholic religion in Chablais, absolutely depended; or of incurring the enmity of every person of consideration in the dominions of the Duke of Savoy. Even the sovereign, in quality of Grand Master, had a peculiar interest in obstructing the execution of these orders of his Holiness. He was at once judge and party; a delicate situation for a subject of the character of Francis, who feels himself entrusted with the duty of supporting the interests of God, but which he cannot maintain, without violating those of his sovereign. Less considerable difficulties would have daunted the courage of a man less firm, and less devoted to God, than Francis. However these were not the only trials, which he had to surmount.

The affair under consideration was necessarily to be brought before the council of the Duke, composed chiefly of persons, who were connected by blood or by alliance with the commanders of the orders. This obstacle was attended with another. It has been related that Francis had carried several measures in the council, in opposition to the sentiments of the old counsellors of

his sovereign, and that he had gained more than one advantage by his address and eloquence; there was therefore reason to believe, that they would feel a malignant pleasure in traversing a design, which they had never approved. But what gave him the greatest uneasiness, was the nature of the affair, and the claims of the two opposing orders, which bore the appearance of justice. In order to understand this difficulty, it is necessary to take a retrospective view of the origin of this business.

* After the Catholic religion had been banished from Chablais and the bailiwicks, Pope Gregory XIII. who had foreseen, that it might one day be re-established, was aware, at the same time that, if the Calvinists were permitted to usurp all the benefices both secular and regular, the restitution of the ecclesiastical property might eventually prove an obstacle to the re-establishment. This therefore, he was determined to obviate; and for this purpose he annexed the benefices to the military orders of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus. The plan was safe and well judged; he wanted the protection of powerful persons,

* Aug. of Sales. Book IV. Anen. Book I.

who might take possession of the property in question, and support their claims in opposition to the efforts of the Calvinists. These orders, following the military profession, and composed of the most distinguished persons in the dominions of the Duke of Savoy, and having this Prince for their Grand Master, formed the strongest party against the common enemy. The Calvinists themselves were well aware of their situation; they entertained no doubt, that if they acted in opposition to these military orders, they would draw upon themselves all the forces of Savoy and Piedmont. They therefore left the Knights in quiet possession of the property, which had been consigned to them, and made no attempt to excite any commotion. All this proved a source of great wealth to these two orders; and the patronage of the Duke of Savoy, who had in his gift all the commanderies, became in consequence very considerable.

It became necessary to stand in direct opposition to the powerful interests of these two orders, in order to persuade the Duke to consent, that the benefices under consideration should be taken from these military fraternities, and restored to their former possessors. However as the Catholic religion had been re-established in Chablais,

in the manner which has been related, Francis had zeal enough to make the proposal to the Duke, and he was enabled to convince him, that the Catholic religion could not long be supported in that province, without this resumption of the ecclesiastical property. The Prince in consequence gave his consent in writing, that Francis should repair to Rome to negotiate the business. This was the motive of the journey, which has been mentioned. He obtained of the Pope all necessary briefs, to complete this great affair. It was to the execution of these briefs, that the commanders of the orders raised the vigorous opposition, which has been referred to.

The conduct of the commanders appeared in some degree rational, as Gregory XIII. in the bull which he issued for the union of the benefices to the two military orders, had expressly declared, that in the event of the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in Chablais, the commanders should not be compelled to allow to the curates more than a decent maintenance, and that they should enjoy the remaining portion of the revenues. This article had been carried into effect; and the orders insisted, that no farther demand could be made.

However Clement VIII. paid no regard to this clause; and he ordered that the property disposed of by Gregory XIII. should revert to the former possessors, without making any reservation whatever in favour of the two orders. He proceeded even farther; for in opposition to the usual style of the court of Rome, the parties interested in the question, were not cited nor heard in their defence; the Pope contented himself with the consent of the Duke of Savoy, the Grand Master of the two orders. The commanders in consequence declared, that they appealed from the Pope ill informed, to the Pope rightly informed; a mode of prolonging the affair to such lengths, as never to reach the end.

This was a source of the greatest apprehension to Francis; he was persuaded that a suitable provision for learned and enlightened pastors could not be made too early; and he despaired of finding any of this description, as long as the benefices should be reduced to a bare maintenance for the incumbents. Under these embarrassing circumstances, in which he consulted no other interest, than that of God and religion, he resorted to prayer, his usual resource when he was exposed to the contradictions of men. After having filled

his soul with force and light in that heavenly exercise, he waited on the Duke, and presented the memorials, which he had prepared in answer to the complaints of the commanders of the two orders.

The Prince on his side was exposed to no considerable embarrassment. He could not deny, that he had given his consent to all that Francis had negotiated at Rome; that he had judged the resumption of the benefices absolutely necessary, and that he had felt a full conviction, that without such a measure, the Catholic religion could not long subsist in Chablais. Besides, his esteem for Francis of Sales was too great, treacherously to abandon him in an affair, which had been undertaken by his orders.

But Princes, like the rest of mankind, have their own interests to consult; and the Duke foresaw, that he was likely to have such contests with the court of France, as did not permit him to raise any discontent in the breasts of his own nobility. The expedient, which he adopted on this critical occasion, was to postpone the affair to a more convenient season, and to satisfy Francis, by promoting his private interest. For this purpose, he offered him a considerable sum

of money; to reimburse him for the expences, which he had incurred during his mission in Chablais.

Francis not only declined the pecuniary compensation; he even made an offer to the Duke to continue his missionary labours at his own expence, as long as his Highness should think proper. But he represented to his sovereign with such force of reasoning, that to postpone the affair under consideration to another time, would terminate in the ruin of the whole business, that the Duke finally yielded to his arguments, and gave his consent to the execution of the briefs issued by the Pope.* After this victory, the consent of the commanders was easily obtained. Thus a general agreement prevailed on this intricate subject; and the Duke addressed letters to the Senate of Chambery, directing that body to verify without any modification, the briefs of the Pope, which would be presented to them in his name by the coadjutor of Geneva. Francis was the bearer of these letters; and after the verification of the briefs, he departed for Chablais with an express commission from the Pope, the Bishop and the Duke, to carry them into execution. He

* Aug. of Sales. Book IV. - Anon. Book I.

devoted the remaining part of the year one thousand five hundred and ninety-nine, and some time of the following year, to the accomplishment of this important purpose.

Already had the pastors been reinstated in the parishes, the churches and monasteries rebuilt, and Chablais had begun to assume a new appearance. The Catholic religion was daily taking deeper root; and the people recovering from their errors, began to do freely and even with zeal, what many in the first instance had undertaken from human considerations, when heresy, ever awake to every event, that can favour its progress, was at the point of re-entering that fine province. This danger threatened in consequence of a war between Henry IV. of France, and Charles Emmanuel Duke of Savoy, for the restoration of the Marquisate of Salucca.

By the treaty of Vervins, this affair had been referred to the Pope, in order that it might be adjusted in a friendly manner. But the Duke of Savoy, perceiving that his Holiness, was convinced of the superior claims of France, and likely to decide the question in her favour, betrayed so much distrust on the occasion, that the Pope, offended at this conduct, at length de-

clined the task of arbitration, and left the parties at full liberty to terminate the difference in their own manner. The Duke went to France in person, to discuss the affair with Henry IV. But as sincerity and good faith did not guide his steps, he returned without bringing it to a conclusion.

After many fruitless negotiations the two sovereigns were unable to come to any agreement, and war was openly declared. The Marshal de Biron entered Bresse, which he reduced in a short time. Lesdiguières soon conquered Savoy; and the king himself penetrated into the dominions of the Duke by the provinces of Faucigny and Chablais, which made not even a shew of resistance. At the approach of the king, the city of Geneva and the Swiss Protestants, irritated at the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in Chablais, made an offer to join their forces with those of his majesty. The king, who had not been able in so short a time, to raise an army sufficiently powerful, to take the field without allies, accepted their services. Thus the Calvinists entered sword in hand Chablais and the bailiwicks, to revenge their private injuries, under the pretext of assisting Henry IV, in obtaining satisfaction from the Duke of Savoy.

It is easy to estimate the danger to which the Catholic religion was thus exposed, as the Duke

of Savoy had withdrawn all his troops from his strong places, and had not a sufficient force to take the field. Already were the Catholic pastors driven from their churches, their houses and benefices seized by the Calvinists; and such events had passed, as excited much concern for the new Catholics, whose faith but yet unsteady, was unable to stand such a trial; when Francis, who had every thing to apprehend from the fury of the Calvinists, resolved to station himself like a bulwark in defence of the house of Israel. His first care was to present to the king a very respectful petition, in which he conjured his majesty, to make a distinction between the interests of his crown and those of religion; to remember that he was the most Christian king; and that in quality of the eldest son of the Church, he was obliged to protect her, and to give a strict charge to his troops, not to offer any violence to the priests and to the Catholics of Chablais and the bailiwicks. To this address the king gave as favourable an answer, as could possibly be desired; and he directed all his officers to provide that no injury should be done to the Catholic religion by his irruption into the province.

As Francis was proceeding to all parts, to ensure the execution of the king's orders, he fell in

with a party, that took him prisoner, and conducted him to the Marquis of Vitry, who commanded for the king in the province. By such an event men proposed to themselves their own design; but God had another. The Marquis having learned the name and character of his prisoner, received him with the most distinguished honour; and was so enamoured of the charms of his conversation, that he complied with all his requests, and gave orders of so positive a nature, that the Catholic pastors were reinstated in their houses and benefices, and the Calvinists constrained to yield the usurped possession. He even offered to make him known to the king, and to send him to Chamberry, to pay his respects to his majesty. But Francis, after having testified the profound veneration, which he entertained for this great king, replied: * "that being a subject of the Duke of Savoy, he should consider it as a failure in duty, if he were to go and pay his respects to his majesty, at a time, when with arms in his hands against his sovereign, he had stripped him of a part of his territories, and was ready to take possession of the rest." Vitry was not hurt at this answer; on the contrary he admired the firmness of Francis, and considered it a duty, to esteem

* Anon. Book I.

that conduct in a native of Savoy, which, under similar circumstances, would have been applauded in a subject of his sovereign.

In the mean time, Francis availed himself so much of the esteem, which Vitry conceived for him, that he was enabled to make a general visit of the diocese of Geneva. He undertook and pursued that service with incredible toil; and the work was so successful, that amidst the horrors of war, he re-established thirty-five parishes, in which he left pastors and missionaries, who supported the Catholic religion against the efforts of the Calvinists.

The war still continued with as much glory to Henry the Great, as with loss to the Duke of Savoy. The reduction of Bresse, of Genevois and Savoy, the capture of the citadel of Bourg, Montmelian, of the strong castles of Conflans and Charbonnière, which had hitherto been deemed impregnable, and the seizure of the inlets to Tarentaise and Maurienne, opened a road to the king into Piedmont. So many conquests, made with such rapidity, spread an alarm at Rome and among the princes of Italy; they interposed their mediation; and peace was finally concluded and published at Lyons, on the seven-

teenth day of January, in the year one thousand six hundred and one.

By this treaty the king consented, that the Dukes of Savoy should retain for ever, the Marquisate of Salucca, and he restored all his conquests in the territories of the Duke. In exchange for the Marquisate, the Duke on his side added to the king and to his successors, the kings of France, the counties of Bresse, Bugey, Veromay, the barony of Gex, and generally all that belonged to him on the course of the Rhone from Geneva. The king was reproached with being duped by the princes of Italy, who had obliged him to cede a territory, which though inconsiderable as to its extent, still gave him an entrance into Savoy, and placed the Duke in an absolute dependance on France.

In truth both princes gained by the exchange; but the king derived more benefit from it than the Duke of Savoy. In return for a Marquisate, at a distance from his frontier, inclosed in the territories of the Duke of Savoy, of an inconsiderable extent, and which could not be maintained without a strong garrison, the expenses of which more than doubled the revenues of the domain, he gained a country twenty-five leagues in extent,

contiguous to his kingdom, and extended his frontier. In the acquired territory, there were at least eight hundred noblemen; and the soil was extremely fertile, and abounded in excellent pasture, calculated for the breed of horses. The Duke, by the acquisition of the Marquisate, may be said to have drawn a thorn from his foot; or rather gently to have removed a sword, which pierced his body. For while the French were masters of that territory, he durst not leave his capital, unless accompanied by four or five hundred horse; he was even obliged to maintain strong garrisons in the heart of his own dominions. By the treaty he set himself at liberty; but his deliverance was purchased at a dear price. In whatever light the event may be viewed, it is considered in some measure miraculous, that the Calvinists derived so little advantage from the war, and that the Catholic religion in Chablais suffered no sort of injury. The whole glory of this was given to Francis; and indeed under God it was his due. This success may however be in some measure ascribed to the firmness of Henry the Great. That distinguished monarch never would suffer, that the Calvinists should avail themselves of the war, which he was waging against the Duke of Savoy, to oppress the Catholic religion; he kept affairs, in that respect, in

the state in which he found them; and the need in which he stood of the forces of that party, and their repeated solicitations on the subject, were never sufficient to induce him, to re-establish error in the places from which it had been exploded. This is not the only proof which may be adduced of the sincerity of the conversion of this great king; other instances will occur in the following part of this history.

Good order and tranquillity having been re-established by this treaty, Francis was requested by the magistrates of Annecy to preach the lent in their town. The people, who entertained for him a singular regard, ardently wished to hear his voice again in their pulpits, after they had been deprived of that gratification for so many years, during his mission in Chablais. The undertaking was a great exertion, after so much fatigue, which he had recently undergone; but he had too tender an affection for the people of Annecy, to refuse them a favour which they solicited with so much eagerness. He accordingly complied with their request; and was preparing to set off with that view, when he received information, that his father, the Count of Sales, was seized with a dangerous illness. That nobleman was advanced to an age, when the slightest indis-

position may eventually prove fatal. Francis therefore, without waiting for the confirmation of this melancholy intelligence, repaired in great haste to the castle of Sales. On his arrival he found his father worse than he had been taught to expect; the aged parent was waiting to receive the last sacraments from the hands of his son. Francis performed this duty with his usual piety and firmness; he spent days and nights by the bed of his dying parent; and though he felt the most piercing sorrow, at the prospect of the loss, which he was about to sustain, he had the resolution to console his pious family and to prepare his father for death.

But God was graciously pleased to spare him the most sensible of all afflictions which he would undoubtedly have felt, if he had witnessed the melancholy event. When the case appeared desperate, the patient felt a sudden relief, and the physicians declared, that if he did not recover, he would survive long enough to give Francis sufficient time, to preach the lent at Annecy. On this assurance Francis departed, after obtaining the consent of his father; but he had scarcely preached during the first weeks, when, he received information as he was one day ascending the pulpit, that his father was no more, and that

the disconsolate family were expecting him to perform the last filial duties. This melancholy intelligence filled him with more lively sensations of grief than he had expected to experience. He possessed for his father, all that tender affection, which a heart like his own, was capable of feeling, and he was singularly beloved by him. However after spending some little time to recollect himself, to make an offering to God of the loss which he had sustained, and to resign himself to the sovereign orders of His justice, who has condemned all mankind to pass the gate of death, he had the resolution to ascend the pulpit, and to preach with as much zeal and presence of mind, as if no afflicting event had taken place. On the conclusion of his sermon, he informed his hearers of the loss, which he had sustained, and asked their permission to go and pay the last filial duties to his deceased parent.

As Francis was not of the number of those unfeeling devotees, who make a profession of insensibility, and of never indulging the indispensable feelings of nature, all the world admired his firmness; but the general surprise was greater, when two days after, he was seen engaged in pursuing the work which he had begun; and in completing his sermons for lent, with that zeal

and eloquence, for which it is universally known; that great liberty of mind is necessary. But it is not without reason, that the Apostle says, "that the just man lives by faith." It is faith, which supports him in every accident of life; and if it does not prevent him from feeling the stroke of calamity, it elevates him to that degree of fortitude, which to the mass of mankind, appears a species of insensibility, but which is in truth, nothing but a respectful submission to the orders of Providence.

About this time Francis was informed, that the Calvinists availed themselves of the cession, which had been made of the bailiwick of Gex to the king of France. It was one of the three, which have been mentioned, where the Catholic religion had made the least progress; and like the others, it formed a part of the diocese of Geneva; but as it had changed its sovereign, Francis could no longer act there with the same authority, as he had exercised, when it belonged to the Duke of Savoy. Besides as the Rhone separates it from the two others, the access to it was difficult; and without the protection of the king of France, the mission could not be extended to that quarter, but with considerable hazard. He beheld, in the mean time, with extreme regret, thirty-five pa-

rishes, of which the bailiwick is composed, involved in error, or at least in danger of relapsing into heresy.

This first gave birth to his design of repairing to the court of France, to obtain from Henry the Great, the permission of labouring for the conversion of that bailiwick, as he had done for Chablais and the two others. He proposed the plan to the Bishop of Geneva, who had not less zeal than himself for the propagation of the faith, but whose infirmities disabled him from acting.

A reason of another nature confirmed him in this design. It is unquestionable that his great reputation and his singular endowments obscured those of the Bishop of Geneva. However attentive he might have been, to do nothing but with perfect dependance on him, and by his express orders, he had remarked, that some of the old dependants of the Bishop had taken offence at his conduct, and were labouring to poison with jealousy, the mind of the aged prelate. He was persuaded, that the virtue of his Bishop placed him above any impressions of this nature; but as he was acquainted with the extreme delicacy of the human heart, and with the disposition which aged and infirm persons have to suffer themselves to be

led by others, he deemed it a duty, to remove from the eyes of his prelate, an object which might eventually prove unpleasant. He therefore opened to him his design of proceeding to the court of France, but was careful not to mention all his motives; he spoke only of the conversion of the bailiwick of Gex, and of his want of support from the king of France, in order to ensure success to his enterprise.

The Bishop approved the design, and the motive of it; and in order to give it a greater air of solemnity, he convoked a general assembly of the church of Geneva, to give to Francis a formal deputation to the court of France. After receiving the instrument of his deputation, he made preparations for his departure, and set off in the course of some days. But as he stood in great need of friends at the court of France, in order to succeed in his object, he passed through Burgundy, with the view of visiting the Baron of Luz, the governor of that province, and of obtaining from him letters of recommendation to his friends at court. He was particularly acquainted with the Baron, and enjoyed a considerable share of his friendship. He found him at Dijon, and was received by him with the greatest marks of esteem and veneration. The honours which the Baron

shewed him, attracted the visits and the complimentary addresses of the leading members of the parliament; and on this occasion he conciliated their benevolence to that degree, that he was obliged to return thither afterwards, to satisfy their ardent desire of seeing him and of hearing his discourses.

The Baron gave him the letters which he requested, addressed to persons who enjoyed the greatest credit at court; he wrote even to his majesty in his favour; and said so many advantageous things concerning the coadjutor of Geneva, that he prepared the mind of that prince for the high esteem, of which he afterwards gave Francis such splendid demonstrations, as excited the jealousy of many powerful persons, who attempted his ruin. Possibly they would have succeeded in their nefarious design, if he had had to do with a prince less enlightened, or rather, if his virtue had not raised him above the suspicion of the crime, with which his enemies attempted to obscure his reputation.

But whatever reliance Francis might have placed on the recommendation of the Baron of Luz, as his business was of a religious nature, and he had an express commission from the Pope,

to labour for the conversion of the bailiwick of Gex, he thought it a duty to depend on the credit of the Bishop of Camerino, the Nuncio of his Holiness at the court of his most christian majesty. The first visit which he paid at Paris, was to this prelate, whom he had known at Rome. He informed him of the purpose of his journey, and requested his protection and support in his negotiation with the king. The Nuncio, who had not forgotten the high estimation, in which Francis was held by the Pope, promised him his most zealous and active services, and undertook to introduce him to his majesty. They were together admitted to an audience. Francis complimented the king in such a manner, as ensured to him the esteem of the whole court; he presented him the letters of the Bishop of Geneva, and those of the Baron of Luz; and the Nuncio explained with somewhat more detail, than Francis had done in his address to the king, the motives which obliged him to resort to the protection of his majesty.

The king, who was the best, as well as the greatest sovereign in Christendom, received Francis with that enchanting air of goodness, which rendered that monarch the idol of his people and of foreign nations; he listened to him with the most favourable attention; and after assuring him, that

he had not forgotten all that he had heard to his advantage, when he was in Savoy, he referred him to Villeroi, the Secretary of State, whom he directed to make a report of the propositions, which Francis had to present.

The Calvinists were at that period extremely powerful at the court of France; the liberty, which the Edict of Nantes had given them of publicly professing their religion, had attracted thither considerable numbers; they filled the highest offices of the State; many of the noblemen surrounding the throne, belonged to that sect; the king himself, who had been educated in their principles, though then a sincere Catholic, could not refrain from shewing them, in consequence of their eminent services, the most distinguished favour; their credit often equalled that of the Catholics; in some instances it possessed a complete ascendancy. Thus Francis necessarily had to encounter the greatest obstacles to the execution of his designs.

Being admitted to an interview with Villeroi, he found that minister extremely averse to his proposal of re-establishing the Catholic religion in the bailiwick of Gex. That politician observed on the subject, that too short a space of time had

elapsed, since that country formed a part of France; and that it was too remote from the centre of his majesty's dominions, to admit of so considerable a change; that such a step would contribute to render the government odious, and to foment sedition among the people; which event would be more probable, as Geneva and the Swiss Protestants would not fail to favour their revolt; that the king, who in the treaty of Verbins had included the Swiss among his allies, could not so soon feel a disposition to break with them; that France exhausted by civil and foreign wars, stood in need of repose; that the king had granted to the Calvinists the Edict of Nantes, which was so favourable to that sect, only to engage them to quit their arms, which the proposed plan would be sufficient to induce them to resume; that many of that party, who had no other profession than that of arms, were already tired of the peace; that they wanted only a slight pretext to violate it; that they would not fail to fly to the assistance of their brethren; that thus, instead of re-establishing the Catholic religion, such a plan would tend to re-kindle the fury of war, which had been extinguished with so much difficulty, and to strengthen the cause of Calvinism, by the unavailing efforts, which would be made to suppress it. He added, that he himself was too

zealous a Catholic, not to wish for the re-establishment of his religion in the places, from which it had been banished; but that it was necessary to wait for a conjuncture which would be propitious to so great a purpose; and that in affairs of state, it was always better not to undertake a transaction, than to embark in it without a sure prospect of success.

To this plausible reasoning of Villeroi, Francis observed in reply, that no one could possibly doubt, that the king of France was able to accomplish in his kingdom, what the Duke of Savoy had undertaken in his dominions, with a high hand and with such complete success; that he had assisted at the council of the Duke, when the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in Chablais, and the three bailiwicks of Gaillard, Terney and Gex, was the subject of deliberation; that many who delivered their opinions on that occasion, expatiated much on the same inconveniences, which had just been mentioned; that the Duke, however, who was a very enlightened prince, paid not the smallest regard to such representations; that no apprehensions of that nature had prevented him from succeeding in the design; that on the present day when he had the honour of addressing the minister of Henry IV. if the bailiwick of

Gex formed a part of the Duke's dominions, he should have no difficulty in labouring under the orders of his Highness, to promote the plan which he now proposed; that he was perfectly acquainted with the people and the country under consideration, and that he begged him to have the goodness to depend on his statement; that the people of Gex were not in a situation to rise; that accustomed to a quiet life, they feared the hazards and devastation of war more than any other event; that they were so inconsiderable in comparison of France, that they would never dare to meditate the design of rising in rebellion against so great a power; that, as the nobility was composed almost without exception of Catholics, and by consequence ever ready to execute the orders of their sovereign, the supposed rebels would not find in the hour of need, a leader to direct their operations; that the republic of Geneva had too much interest in ensuring the protection of France, ever to attempt any opposition to the will of the king; that the alliance of his majesty, was too necessary to the Swiss, to induce them to hazard its loss by giving countenance to rebels; that they were persuaded that the house of Austria, who considered them as subjects in a state of revolt, only waited for the opportunity of placing them again under the yoke; that France alone was ca-

pable of defeating such a plan; and that it might easily be seen, by the apprehension which they had betrayed of involving themselves in a quarrel with the Duke of Savoy, how little disposed they were to enter into a contest with France.

He added, that he wished not any restraint to be employed towards the people of the bailiwick of Gex, but only that they should be placed on the same footing as the other subjects of France; that having been reunited to that kingdom, it was but rational, that they should enjoy the benefit of its laws; that the same Edicts, which permitted the free exercise of the reformed religion, likewise directed, that the Catholic religion should be re-established in the places, from which it had been banished; that the bailiwick of Gex came under this description, as it was an undeniable fact, that for less than a century ago, the Catholic religion was the only one professed in that country; that he accordingly entreated him, to obtain from his majesty his royal licence, that he might be permitted to labour for the conversion of these people, who formed a part of the diocese of Geneva; that he might be allowed to send missionaries into that quarter, and that his majesty would be pleased to encourage the re-establishment of the ancient religion, which he himself so publicly professed to the great edification of his subjects;

that in protecting the cause of God, He would be the protector and support of his throne; that He would never permit, that his good intentions should be frustrated by revolts and events, which human prudence could not foresee; that it was necessary to place some reliance on Providence, and to be persuaded, that the Almighty would never abandon princes, who employed their authority to support a cause so just and so noble as that of the Catholic Church.

With this speech of Francis, Villeroi was so delighted, that he requested to have it in writing. Francis instantly complied with his wishes; and the minister promised to make a report to the king, in terms as favourable as he could desire. The departure of the king for Fontainebleau prevented him from concluding the business, as soon as he intended; thus Francis was obliged to prolong his stay at Paris beyond the term which he had fixed.

But while he was labouring so advantageously in the cause of the Church, God added such a degree of splendor to his reputation, as ever enables an agent to complete the most difficult undertakings. The court and the city of Paris emulously shewed him the most marked attention; those who

had accompanied the king in his journey to Savoy, published the details which they knew of his piety, of his learning, of the apostolic labours, which he had undergone in the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in Chablais and the bailiwicks, of the dangers which he had encountered, and of the generous courage, with which he had often exposed his life for the preservation of the faith. Others reported the conferences, which he had held with Beza, the advantage which he had on many occasions obtained over that celebrated minister, and the necessity to which he had reduced him of returning to the Catholic Church, if he had been disposed to follow the dictates of his conscience, or rather if a sense of false honour and temporal advantages had not stood in his way. The Princess Mary of Luxembourg, Duchess of Mercœur, who was at Rome when Francis arrived there on the business which has been related, was delighted in mentioning the high esteem and consideration in which she observed him to be held by the Pope and the Cardinals, and the reputation which he had acquired of being one of the most learned men of his age, by the profound answers, which he had given to the questions that had been proposed to him at his examination.

General observation confirmed these accounts; and his conduct corresponded so well with the

high opinion which had been formed of his virtue, that a plan was adopted of detaining him in France, by procuring him a Bishopric more considerable than that of Geneva, and attended with less labour. At the same time information arrived, that the preacher who had been appointed to preach the following lent at court, was prevented by some unforeseen accident, from fulfilling that duty; a resolution was immediately taken of supplying his place, by applying to the coadjutor of Geneva; and the Duchesses of Mercœur and of Longueville, undertook to make to him the proposal. He at first declined the invitation, on the ground that he had so little time to make any preparation; but at length he yielded to their pressing solicitations, with the hope of producing some good effect in a place, where certainly a skilful and disinterested preacher like himself was much wanted.

Indeed the court of France was not only filled with Calvinists, but with persons, who made an open profession of impiety and libertinism, the unfortunate effects of a long civil war, which was then but brought to a close. Francis, with a view to render his sermons more useful to every class, undertook to combat at once both heresy and impiety. As his discourses presented nothing

low or mean, so there was a complete absence of all affectation and of an excess of study; his manner was grave, forcible, judicious, solid and replete with that majestic eloquence, which becomes the word of God, and of which the prophets have left us such distinguished models. He studied them continually; or rather he made them the subject of his prayers and meditations; for he never read the holy scripture but on his knees, and with a degree of respect as profound, as if God had vouchsafed visibly to converse with him. Full of the great truths, of which the sacred oracles are such a faithful source, instead of flattering ignorance and vice, or of speaking but superficially from a delicate attention to rank and fortune, he directed all his views, to extricate souls from that profound ignorance, in which he saw them plunged; to root out error and vice; to impress the minds of his hearers with the fear of the Divine judgments; to induce them to think seriously on the business of their salvation, and to soften the hardness of their hearts, by promoting a solid conversion, and a true change of life.

These important topics formed the subject of his first discourses; but, as he saw that both Catholics and Calvinists, charmed with the beauty of his eloquence, crowded with emulation to hear

him, he entered on the subject of controversy, but in a manner both useful and uncommon. He did not confine himself to the task of combating the tenets of the Calvinists; he directed his attacks against their primitive principles and their original establishment; he contended that salvation was unattainable among them, because they were not, and could not be the true Church; and he proved this proposition by maintaining that their ministry was without authority, and their ministers without any legitimate mission. On this subject, he related what Beza himself records, in his *Portraits of illustrious men*, that after the death of Pavena, the first pretended martyr of the reformed church, his disciples, who consisted only of artisans and laymen, spread themselves in different directions, and founded what are called the reformed churches of Metz, of Orleans, of Senlis and of Aubigny. He added, that the same author relates in his history, that Peter Leclerc, a carder by profession, was chosen minister by an assembly of carders and fullers; that the Calvinistic Church of Paris could not boast a more legitimate original; that its first minister was a young man of the name of Masson de la Riviere, who was called to the ministry by a company of laymen; that the greatest part of their churches had been established in the same manner, that is, by persons

who did not possess either the authority or the power of ordaining lawful ministers; that the ministers of the present day, the descendants of such progenitors, could not possess more authority; or in other words, they had no authority at all, because they received their powers from persons who had no legitimate jurisdiction themselves. These facts, supported by the testimony of Beza, were besides so public and so notorious, that they could admit of no doubt.

Francis contended, that the Calvinists could justify themselves only by proving from the sacred scripture, which according to them was the only rule of faith, that laymen were empowered to ordain legitimate ministers; but at the same time he defied them to do it, and he maintained that they could not find a single passage, or a solitary example to authorize such ordinations. He cited many that proved the contrary; and asserted that for sixteen hundred years, from the time of Christ to the period when he was speaking, the Church had always condemned such ordinations, and treated them as unlawful; a sentiment which had been adopted in every part of the Christian world. Hence he drew an inevitable conclusion, that where there was neither mission nor legitimate ordination, there could be no pastors; that

where there could be no pastors, there could be no sacraments; and that where there were no sacraments, there could be no true Church; which was the real situation of the Calvinists. This discourse, supported with the powers of eloquence, and particularly with the authority of the scripture, of the fathers and of ecclesiastical history, made a strong impression on the minds of the people, who were before much prepossessed in favour of Calvinism. Attempts were made in vain to furnish an answer; the ministers who had a consultation on the subject, could come to no agreement; some laid claim to an ordinary mission; others stated their title to an extraordinary mission; but not being able to reply to the objections which were brought against them, they could not prevent a very evident conclusion, that they had usurped the ministry, without agreeing to state from what authority they had derived their powers.

* The embarrassment of the ministers on a question of this importance, on which depended the justification of all their enterprises against the Catholic Church, gave very general scandal to persons of various descriptions. The Countess of

* Aug. of Sales. Book IV. Anon. Book I.

Perdrieuville was of this number; she was a lady who had great pretensions to knowledge, but her attainments consisted of very strong prepossessions, of a degree of obstinacy almost invincible, and of an acquaintance with some detached passages of the holy scripture, which were ill understood by her, and worse applied; her attachment to the new sect could not be exceeded, and her esteem for the ministers was carried to an enthusiastic admiration. Accident or curiosity led her to hear the sermon of Francis, which has been mentioned. She was affected; she consulted the ministers, who gave her no satisfaction; she then repaired to Francis, and requested the favour of conferring with him privately. In such interviews he always displayed peculiar powers; in the pulpit, he in a manner, but gave the outlines of that, which he never failed to complete in a private conversation. Those who have had any personal acquaintance with the Calvinists, are not to be informed, that prejudice and presumption ever prove the great obstacles to their conversion. Humility and docility are virtues, with which they are scarcely acquainted. Accustomed to dictate on matters of belief, and to yield to no authority, but to that of the sacred scriptures, as explained by themselves, they are, in their own opinion, raised above the necessity of listening to

instruction; a dreadful disposition in an attempt to relinquish error, and to return to the way of truth. These difficulties Francis had to encounter in the instructions, which he imparted to the Countess. But he succeeded so well in her conversion, that she engaged her whole family, which was extremely numerous, to embrace the Catholic doctrine. Her conversion was followed with that of the illustrious house of Raconis, of which one, more fervent than the rest, embraced a religious state among the Capuchins, and led ever after a most exemplary life.

The sermon, which has been alluded to, was followed with others of equal energy; and by the continuation of the Divine blessing on his zeal, Francis converted so great a number of the most obstinate Calvinists, that Cardinal Perron, who witnessed the circumstance, was induced to say, "that he never knew a Calvinist, whom he himself was not able to convince; but to convert them, was a talent reserved for the coadjutor of Geneva." It is unquestionably true, that independently of his extraordinary skill and his profound acquaintance with controversial subjects, he possessed a most graceful delivery and an insinuating address, of which the effects were irresistible. His patience and his incomparable meekness, won

every heart; even the Calvinists, who considered him as the bane of their religion, were unable to withhold either their esteem or their affection.

But the conversion of the Calvinists, was not the only work, which engaged so successfully his constant attention; he experienced no less success in reclaiming many Catholics of very dissolute morals; who having lived for a long series of years in habits of vice, had almost despaired of their salvation. The disorders of the heart are not less difficult to cure, than those of the mind; it is often more easy to enlighten one than to remove the inveterate habits of the other. Error once discovered, soon becomes an object of hatred; it is then easily relinquished. The same observation cannot be applied to an attachment to pleasure; in vain is the disorder made known; it ceases not to engage the affections; the conviction of the mind does not, by an inevitable consequence, influence the heart. The evil may be known and felt; but still the patient may want resolution to apply a remedy. The invariable maxim of Francis on this subject, cannot be too studiously copied. He held, that it was a matter of necessity, never to flatter sin, but to shew a delicate attention to the sinner; his representations of sin were literally frightful; but he never could

endure, that virtue should be painted in such colours, as to excite either hatred or disgust; on the contrary he wished, that no pains should be spared to exhibit it in all its charms; and when once he had spread terror in the minds of his hearers, by the apprehension of the Divine judgments, and of the fatal effects of libertinism, he spoke in so feeling a manner on the peace of the heart, on the tyranny of the passions, on the joy of a good conscience, and on that anticipated happiness, which the hope of a better life never fails to produce, that it became impossible to withhold a desire of cultivating virtue. He always asserted, that bitter zeal had ruined more souls than it had saved; and that he knew by experience, that many, who were prepared to leave their evil practices, had resorted to them with redoubled ardour, by a species of despair, occasioned by imprudent management, particularly in the beginning of their conversion.

Francis, ever severe to himself, shewed nothing but mildness to others; but this disposition in him was not a weak condescension, which flatters crime, under the pretext of sparing the sinner; it was a prudent conduct, which was adapted to the various characters and the different wants of his neighbours; he often bewailed with tears before

his penitents, those sins which they did not themselves deplore; and by his example he inspired them with that sorrow, which a sense of their own miseries should have excited, and led them to adopt that conduct, which was necessary to prevent the danger of a relapse. He practised himself those austerities, which they had not resolution to encounter; and by such means, he obtained for them from God, a spirit of penance, or he induced them to submit to its rigours. He mingled his tears with the lamentations of those, whose hearts were softened; he watched, he prayed, he fasted, he alleviated their trouble, by dividing the pressure. But when he met with those generous souls, that are perfectly disengaged from earthly objects, and capable of undertaking any thing for God, he held an exact, firm and elevated course; he conducted them in the paths of the most sublime sanctity. This will be exemplified in the conduct which he observed towards the Baroness de Chantal. By this prudent and charitable management, making himself all to all, he gained to God a very considerable number of souls, whom a method more severe, or less under the influence of discretion, would probably have ruined. Men are naturally fond of liberty; they cannot divest themselves of their in-born sentiments of independance; rigour disgusts

them; meekness wins their hearts. Happy are they, who, called by God to the care of souls, are enabled to steer an even course, between too much laxity of condescension on one side, and too great severity of rigour on the other:

After the conclusion of lent, the Duchesses of Longueville and of Mercœur, who had no doubt that Francis, possessed of a small revenue, and always intent on the distribution of alms even beyond his means, must necessarily be in great want, sent him by a nobleman of their acquaintance, a purse richly ornamented, and filled with golden crowns. Francis looked at the workmanship, without opening the purse; then returning it to the nobleman, he desired him to thank the Princesses in his name, for the honour they had done him, by their assiduous attention to his sermons, and their care in contributing by their good example to the fruit, which they might produce; that this was all the recompence which he looked for in this world, and that he gave gratuitously what he had so liberally received from the bounty of God. The nobleman pressed his acceptance of the purse, and told him, that the Princesses had given him positive orders not to bring back the present. Francis replied, that if they had any difficulty in taking again, what they had purposed

to offer to God in the person of his ministers, they would make him an offering much more acceptable, by giving it to the poor, who stood in greater need of such a benefaction than himself. In this manner he refused many considerable presents, which persons of the first quality were eager to send. This disinterested conduct raised his reputation to that height, that the general conversation at Paris perpetually related to the holy Bishop of Geneva;* for that was the appellation, by which he was distinguished; every one hastened to place himself under his direction, and his counsels were received with a reverence due to oracular mandates issued by the Almighty.

Some days after Easter, the king returned to Paris; and Francis expected that he should be admitted to an audience, on the business concerning which he had conferred with Villeroy. But his majesty, who had been informed by Cardinal Perron, of the very excellent discourses which he had delivered at the Chapel of the Louvre, during lent, was eager to hear him. The deputies of Geneva, who were at that time at court on im-

* Though he was not yet Bishop of Geneva, but only coadjutor, the king and the court always honoured him with that title.

portant business, assisted at the discourse. Francis surpassed himself on the occasion; and the king himself was so charmed with his eloquence, that turning to the deputies, he, at the conclusion of the sermon, said in a loud tone: "Well gentlemen, what do you say of the discourse of your Bishop?" "Sire," said one of them, "if the Duke of Savoy could produce as powerful reasons against us as the Bishop, we would surrender to him the Episcopal See, and perhaps should all embrace his religion!" The king declared that their judgment was perfectly correct; that he never had heard a preacher, who was more affecting, who possessed more unction, or whose life and actions better supported his precepts. It is reported, that from this period, he formed a design of detaining him in France, by giving him a considerable Bishopric. Indeed we should now place him in the first rank of our most holy and illustrious Prelates, if his humility had not thwarted the views of the king.

At the same time, information arrived of the death of Philip Emmanuel of Lorraine, Duke of Mercœur. This Prince had taken Albe-Royale, from Mahomet III. and he had raised troops at his own expence, to assist the Emperor in his first excursion to Hungary. His great achievements induced Rodolphus II. to make him

general of his armies; and it was on his return from his able defence of Canise, a place besieged by the Turks, that he died at Nuremberg. As he was brother-in-law to Henry III. the predecessor of his majesty, the king was desirous that every honour should be paid to his memory, that was usually shewn to the Princes of the blood. The Duchess of Mercœur his widow, omitted no means of testifying her grief, and of honouring the memory of so distinguished a Prince; she directed every preparation to be made for the performance of the funeral obsequies in the church of our Lady at Paris; and Francis was desired to pronounce the oration in praise of the deceased. It was thus in the presence of the Royal Princes, of the prelates of France, and of an immense concourse of people, that he made that excellent discourse, which was afterwards printed.

He there gives to this valiant Prince the just commendations to which he was entitled for having so often exposed his life, and so frequently bled in the cause of God and religion; but he paints in colours peculiarly glowing, his piety towards God, his moderation in prosperity and in victory, his humanity towards the vanquished, his mild comportment to his troops, his tender care to spare their lives, his feeling concern for

the poor, and his inflexible constancy in doing justice to all people, as if he had been their father, and not a general of an army, who is often compelled by hard necessity to connive at great injustice. He concluded that if vices reflect dishonour on men, whatever be their situation in life, vicious conduct must be peculiarly shameful in the great; that the more they are exposed to the observation of mankind and raised above others, the greater should be their attention to do nothing unworthy of the rank to which the Almighty has raised them; that brutal grandeur, supported by empty ostentation, must ever prove contemptible; that the more any man has received from God, the greater ought to be his gratitude; that kings should ever make it their glory to hold of Him their greatness; and that no person should ever forget to reflect often on one critical and interesting truth, that we die only to return to life, happy or wretched for an eternity. This discourse was received with a tumult of applause; and Francis notwithstanding his extreme repugnance, was obliged to yield to the entreaties of the Duchess of Mercœur, that it should be made public.

It was about this time, that the Cardinal de Berule communicated to Francis the design, which

he had formed, of establishing the Carmelite Nuns in France. Francis who esteemed that holy order, agreeably to its transcendant merit, approved the project; he omitted nothing to forward this establishment; he employed the interest of his friends at Rome for this purpose; and as the Pope held him in high estimation, he availed himself of his ascendant over the mind of the Pontiff, to promote this holy enterprise. The success of the undertaking corresponded with the expectations and the efforts of these two great men; and this order is observed at the present period to abound in virtue to that degree, and to produce such a series of holy personages, that it cannot be made a matter of doubt, that their prayers daily draw upon the kingdom, the most copious benedictions.

There was not a pious assembly in Paris, to which Francis was not invited. No religious plan was adopted without his participation; no affair of consequence, tending to promote the glory of God was transacted without his advice. Scarcely had he time, after such multiplied fatigues, to allot a few hours to that repose, which is indispensably necessary to recruit the powers of nature. He however, did not lose sight of the principal object of his journey to Paris; and as that busi-

ness often obliged him to appear at court, he had frequent opportunities of conversing privately with the king. This great prince who esteemed his virtue and his learning, often took occasion to consult him on the most intricate and delicate cases of conscience, respecting his own conduct. It may be pronounced, that this was one of the nicest and most critical conjunctures, in which he was ever placed. There is so much danger in unfolding naked truth to the great, and this expression, *it is not lawful for you*, proved so fatal to St. John the Baptist, that even the most virtuous persons are daunted at the attempt. But Francis never betrayed the timid weakness to flatter the vices of the great, not even of sovereigns; and when he was consulted on the affairs of their salvation, far from seeking for pretexts and modifications not to disturb their fatal tranquillity, he made use of a holy freedom, but with such delicate precaution and such consummate meekness, that they received from his hands the most unpleasant remedies, without tasting their bitterness.

This was exemplified in his communication with Henry IV. We should have been unacquainted with one of the finest traits of his life, if this great king had not himself preserved the circumstance. For one day assigning a reason for

the extraordinary affection, which he bore for the Bishop of Geneva, he declared that *he loved him, because that prelate had never flattered him.* A sentiment worthy of a king, who was ever the idol of France; and whose name cannot be mentioned, without exciting in the breasts of Frenchmen, that tender regard which is due to the memory of so distinguished and so good a prince. This example demonstrates, that it is not so much the truth, which is found unpleasant to the ears of the great, as the manner of unfolding it. There is nothing more becoming the character of great princes, than a fondness for truth. Fortune, if we may be allowed the expression, bestows on them every thing else with the utmost profusion. A sincere friend is a gift of heaven. The very great distance between kings and subjects, almost precludes the possible existence of such a character. Henry the Great had other sentiments. He wanted friends, and he found them. It is true that he knew where to place his confidence; but when once he had conferred that honour on an individual, he permitted him to assume that character, and to exercise its most sacred rights. Of this the history of St. Francis of Sales, furnishes an example, which reflects too much honour on the memory of this incomparable prince, to suffer the anecdote to fall into oblivion.

There was at court a nobleman, of the name of Deshayes, whom the king had appointed governor of Montargis. It is the same person, who was mentioned, in the account of the communication of Francis with Beza. He was a loyal subject and an excellent man, who loved his king, and possessed a degree of fidelity; superior to every temptation. The king was persuaded of this circumstance; and Deshayes was accordingly of the number of those, whom this great prince styled his friends. His majesty had remarked a very close connection between Francis and this nobleman; this circumstance one day induced the king to ask Deshayes, which of the two he loved most, himself or the coadjutor of Geneva; which of the two connections was the dearest to his heart; and to which he would give the preference, if by any possible event, he were constrained to make the choice. Deshayes, astonished at this question replied to the king, that the kindness with which his majesty was so gracious as to honour him, never induced him to forget, that he was his subject; that his obligations to him in that quality, would ever be superior to any engagements which he could form; that he had for his service a zeal and fidelity, without limit; but as to friendship, the distance between a king and a subject was too great to permit him to hazard the use of

such a term; though he candidly acknowledged, that he felt for the person of his majesty all those sentiments, which the most tender, but at the same time the most respectful friendship could inspire. The king told him, that he was not inquiring about his obligations as a subject; that he had never doubted of his zeal and fidelity; that his question related to the friendship, which he felt for Henry and not for the king; and he wished to be told explicitly, for which of the two he had the tenderest friendship, the Bishop of Geneva or himself. A courtier more skilled in the arts of dissimulation than Deshayes, would have answered without hesitation; the warmest expressions would have been employed, and an appearance of sincerity would have supplied the place of truth. Deshayes was of a very different character; he would rather have forfeited his fortune than the friendship of Francis; an untruth was repugnant to his principles; he knew not the art of dissimulation; and had he attempted to practice it, his countenance and his manner would have betrayed him. The king, who was delighted with such characters, amused himself with adding to the embarrassment of Deshayes, and pressed his question by saying, *Deshayes, I must have an answer.* At length Deshayes not being able to recede, replied in these terms; "that since his majesty

commanded him to speak, he would own, that he felt for him all the veneration and tender regard, of which he was susceptible; but at the same time, he must say, that he was extremely fond of the Bishop of Geneva." This answer, far from displeasing the king, on the contrary, gave him an exalted opinion of the generous disposition of Deshayes. "I find," said he, "nothing to blame in your sentiments, but I must entreat you both, that I may be associated to your friendship." He added, that he had commissioned the Duke of Epernon to solicit the Bishop of Geneva to remain in France, to promise him the first vacant Bishopric, and in the mean time a pension of four thousand livres. Deshayes, transported with joy, threw himself at the feet of his majesty, to thank him for his handsome offer; more intent on the advantages of his friend, than if the king had made him a corresponding present. But this great king, raising him, said with his usual kindness; "Go and anticipate the commission of the Duke of Epernon, if it be possible; and inform the Bishop of Geneva of my intentions in his favour."

It may be laid down as a general maxim, that the French should be ruled by a sovereign, who exhibits great majesty, who enforces the respect

due to his character, and who admits but little familiar intercourse. It cannot however be denied, that a kind deportment like that of Henry the Great, carries with it undescribable charms. Much prudence is unquestionably necessary to regulate such a manner; but when a sovereign has attained that just medium, so rarely to be found, religion only can impose a proper restraint on the veneration, which the subject is inclined to bestow. It was thus that Henry the Great won the hearts of his subjects; and never was any one found to abuse his familiarity, but the Marshal de Biron; but God permitted that he should meet with deserved punishment.

While this interview between the king and Deshayes was taking place, the Duke of Epernon had already performed his commission; he had solicited Francis, in the name of his majesty, to remain in France, and had made the offer of the Bishopric and of the pension. But the solicitations of the Duke were without effect. Francis replied with great sentiments of gratitude, that his majesty did him more honour than he deserved; that his heroic qualities sufficiently gained all hearts, without the addition of such distinguished benefits; that he was deeply impressed with the proposed happiness of being the subject of so great

and so good a prince; that if he followed the feelings of his own heart, he should embrace such an eligible situation; but that, as to the Bishopric, God had called him against his will to govern the diocese of Geneva; and that to correspond with his vocation, he believed himself obliged to remain at his post during life; that with respect to the pension, the little revenue which he enjoyed, was sufficient for his maintenance, and that any additional supply would only serve to embarrass him in his duties. When this answer was reported to the king, his majesty was exceedingly affected; he admired that noble disengagement from honours and the gifts of fortune, and he could not help remarking, that there was something more noble in despising such objects, than in subduing empires. He ever after proposed him as a model of Christian perfection, and declared, that he knew no one more capable of restoring the ecclesiastical state to its primitive splendor, or of suppressing the heresies which disturbed his kingdom; and that it was pity that so great a man should be banished to the mountains of Savoy.

* It might naturally have been expected, that virtue so distinguished and so generally acknow-

* Aug. of Sales. Book IV. Anon. Book I.

ledged, would have risen above the reach of envy and calumny. But what is there so holy, as not to be exposed to the attacks of these dark and insidious vices? And where do they reign with greater impunity, and possess a more fatal influence, than in the courts of princes? Barren and uncoun tenanced merit never feels their hostility; but when it basks in the sunshine of royal favour, the envious never fail to shew a mortal aversion; and they will rather ruin the party, than forgive superior merit. The effects of this passion Francis experienced at this period of his life. His merit, or rather the favour of the king, excited jealousy; and those infected with this passion, determined to ruin him. To succeed in this design, they formed a plan to accuse him of an attempt to renew the conspiracy of the Marshal de Biron against the life of the king. It is not doubted that the Duke of Savoy was accessary to that celebrated conspiracy. Francis was his subject; and that was the basis of their accusation. They applied to the king, and observed to him, that the apparent virtue of Francis was nothing but hypocrisy in disguise; that in fact he was but an emissary of the Duke of Savoy, and more dangerous and more to be dreaded, as he possessed the art of insinuation, and the talent of conciliating friends; that the re-establishment of the Ca-

tholic religion in the bailiwick of Gex was only a pretext; and that the true motive of his journey to Paris was very different from the apparent object.

These accusations were too vague to produce any effect on the mind of the king; and to give them some strength, they added, that he was intimately connected with all those, who were suspected of being the partisans of Biron, and of being gained by the Duke of Savoy; that he had not been able to refrain from speaking in terms of esteem of the Marshal; that one day going into the church where he was buried, he had been heard to vent very deep sighs; that some time after being requested to preach there, he recommended to his audience the success of an important affair; and that this affair in all probability, could be nothing else but the renewal of the conspiracy of Biron. Hence they concluded, that it would be a prudent measure to seize his person and his papers; and they insisted, that much would be discovered, that never could be suspected from a man apparently so virtuous, and so disengaged from earthly objects.

Though the reasons produced were extremely weak, Henry, who had very delicate feelings on

the affair under consideration, found in them some appearance of probability; but his prudence did not allow him to raise an alarm without farther information. He judged it necessary to direct his motions to be observed; and unfortunately gave the commission to those persons, who had just obtruded their advice, that is, to those who were chiefly interested in giving a colour of truth to their information, whatever might be the consequence. However, as Francis had a considerable number of friends at court, this accusation could not remain so impenetrably secret, without reaching the ears of a nobleman, by whom he was much beloved; he went immediately to convey to him the intelligence; and not finding him, he repaired to the church of St. Benedict, where Francis was preaching during the octave of Corpus Christi. His friend found him at the bottom of the pulpit ready to ascend; and there it was, that he made him acquainted with the crime, that was laid to his charge.

There is scarcely any degree of innocence, that can withstand the effects of such suspicions; trouble and agitation of mind are the natural consequences; and the less inclination the accused party feels for the commission of a crime, proportionably greater is the surprise, that an accusa-

tion can be raised. Francis felt nothing of this natural discomposure. With full reliance on his own innocence, on the discernment and goodness of the king, and particularly on the protection of God, he thanked the nobleman for his information, with a tranquillity which surprised him, ascended the pulpit, and never preached with greater force and eloquence. At the conclusion of the sermon, his noble friend, who heard him, acknowledged that he was seriously alarmed at his composure. He conjured him to neglect no means of extricating himself from an affair, in which the least suspicious circumstance might prove fatal to his reputation and to his life. Francis replied, that he was determined to justify himself, but that he should wish to perform the duty without injuring his enemies. The nobleman replied, that it was a matter of little consequence, at whose expence his justification should be made; that his accusers could only be villains, who deserved not to be spared; and that justice required, that they should be covered with that confusion, which they had so well merited.* Francis contented himself with saying, that he did not reason in that manner, and that God would give him the grace to justify himself, without accusing or discomposing any individual. He instantly went to see the king.

But he was already justified in the mind of Henry. That great prince had been unable to reflect on the general tenor of his conduct, the sanctity of his life, the meekness of his disposition, his zeal and disengagement from the world, without acquitting him of the charge; he even reproached himself for having one moment suspected him of a crime, which cannot be thought of without horror. At that time of sober reflection, Francis entered the royal apartment, with that tranquil and sweet air, which marked the innocence of his soul; whatever shadow of suspicion might have existed in the mind of the king, was in an instant dissipated. His majesty even anticipated his design; and taking him aside, told him not to take the trouble to make any justification; that the more enormous was the crime, with which he was charged, the less he believed him capable of committing it; that he was persuaded of his sincere attachment; and that, if it were necessary, he would himself be responsible for his innocence. Francis replied, that he had never interposed in affairs of state; but that if he had to embark in that course, he should not begin his political career, by an action so atrocious and so unworthy of the favours, which he had received from his majesty; that he assured him, that he had never received any order from his own sove-

reign to his disadvantage; and that there was no consideration, nor any authority on earth, that could oblige him to conspire against the lowest of mankind, much less against the greatest and the best prince in the world; and that so far from seeking to destroy so precious a life, God was his witness, that he was willing to part with his own, for his preservation. After this pathetic address, he made a profound reverence, to kiss the hand of his majesty; but this great prince, embracing him tenderly, said in a low tone: "My Lord Bishop of Geneva, I am persuaded of the truth of all that you have said; let us be greater friends than ever."

Any other man but Francis would have demanded justice against his accusers; specious reasons would not have been wanting, and the honour due to individual character would have served as a pretext to private vengeance. But he was so far from entertaining these sentiments, that he was determined to solicit their pardon of the king, if he had discovered any intention to bring them to punishment. But princes are often obliged to dissemble their knowledge of many events; even those, who like Henry are lovers of justice, have often reasons not to administer it with that exact severity, which is to be desired.

But in the place of that satisfaction, which Francis never asked, no sooner had he left the royal apartments, than this great prince enquired of Deshayes, what was the amount of the revenues of the Bishop of Geneva. Deshayes informed his majesty, that he was formerly very rich; but that since the inhabitants of Geneva had usurped the greatest part of his revenues, he had at most but three or four thousand livres a year. The king observed that such a revenue was not sufficient for a deserving man like the coadjutor of Geneva; and he ordered Deshayes to make him an offer in his name of a pension of a thousand crowns, for which he was going to issue a writ. Deshayes went immediately to perform his commission. Francis who had already declined a more considerable pension, thought there would be an appearance of affectation in persisting in an obstinate refusal to accept the favours of so great a king. His answer therefore to Deshayes was, that he requested him to thank his majesty in his name, and to tell him, that his presents did him too much honour, to decline them; but that, as he was not at the time in want of money, and he knew not the art of keeping it, his majesty would be graciously pleased to consent, that the sum in question might remain in the hands of his treasurer, and that he would ask for it in the hour *

of want. The king perceived, that this was a polite refusal; but he thought the answer so ingenious, that he could not help saying, that he had never given a pension, for which he had been so politely thanked, as for that offered to the Bishop of Geneva.

Notwithstanding the failure of his enemies in raising against him a groundless charge, he could not help regarding the event as a warning from heaven, to retire from the court of France. He redoubled his solicitations to bring the affair of the bailiwick of Gex to a speedy conclusion. He applied immediately to the king. But whatever might have been the desire of this great monarch, to give him complete satisfaction, he was enabled but partially to comply with his request; but he did it with this obliging declaration, that he should distrust the ardent conduct of any other, but that he was confident, that the zeal of the Bishop of Geneva would never be attended but with beneficial effects for the service of God, and the advantage of his kingdom. After Francis had thanked his majesty in the most humble terms, he observed to him, that difficulties might arise in the execution of his orders, and that he should want letters from his majesty to the Baron of Luz, and to the parliament of Dijon, to which he

begged he might be allowed to apply in the event of any difficulty, that might require the interposition of his royal authority. He therefore entreated the king, to extend that protection, with which he was so kind as to honour him, to the ecclesiastics of the bailiwicks of Gex, of Bugey and of Valromey. The king, who knew not how to do a favour by halves, instantly complied with the whole extent of his demands: thus Francis having no more business at court, took leave of his majesty, and departed to the great regret of his friends, in order to repair to Annecy.

* At the distance of some days journey from Paris, he received letters conveying the information of the death of Claud de Grenier, Bishop of Geneva. He was a prelate of superior merit, distinguished by his sanctity and his abilities; he was ennobled by his birth, being descended from one of the most illustrious and most ancient families of the country; he had been early trained in the monastery of Talloires, of the order of St. Benedict; there he had made his profession, and was prior of the house, when the Duke of Savoy named him to the Bishopric of Geneva. He governed that church five and twenty years, with so

* Aug. of Sales. Book IV. Anon. Book I.

much prudence, piety, zeal, firmness and meekness, that he gained the esteem and the affection of the whole diocese. He was habitually severe to himself; and his elevation to the See of Geneva, induced him to make no relaxation of the rule, which he religiously observed till his death. He loved the poor with parental affection; he observed a rigid economy, in order to be enabled to relieve their distress; and notwithstanding the smallness of his income, his charities were extremely abundant. Towards the end of his days his infirmities greatly increased; but the continual illness, with which he was afflicted, contributed to display a model of patience and of disengagement from earthly affections. Of this latter quality he gave an instance never sufficiently to be admired, in choosing Francis of Sales for his successor, to the prejudice of his own nephew, who possessed every quality, that could adorn the character of a holy Bishop. His memory is held in benediction; and the church of Geneva at the present day considers him as one of the greatest prelates, that ever governed it from the period of its foundation.

Francis, who had always honoured him as his father, and loved him as a friend, lamented his death with the deepest and the sincerest affliction,

as he was not elevated with the thoughts of filling his place. In fact, he was not yet recovered from those pious alarms, which the duties of the Episcopal station had excited; the nearer he approached to the awful charge, the more unworthy he judged himself of the honour; and could his wishes have rendered his predecessor immortal, he would not have spared them, from a secondary motive of not succeeding to his station. However as it was a matter of necessity, to fill the vacant See, he hastened to Savoy; but he delicately postponed his entrance into Annecy, that the joy occasioned by the arrival of their new Bishop, might not diminish that tender tribute of grief, which was due to the memory of his predecessor. He chose the Castle of Sales for the place of his retreat; and thither he proceeded to prepare himself for his consecration. The domain of Sales was formerly an Earldom; but it has been made a Marquisate by the Duke of Savoy. The situation of the castle in a small plain at the foot of mount Ferée, is not unpleasant; and the river Filire, which flows by it, enhances the beauty of the scene. The house is extremely commodious for the reception of guests; of this a judgment may be formed by the size of one of the wings, which contains twenty-six rooms on a floor, with adjoining closets. The gardens and the other conveniences necessary and

ornamental correspond with the building ; and on the whole the castle of Sales was then one of the finest houses of Savoy. This was not however the motive which induced Francis to select this spot, in which he might prepare himself for his consecration : he was too full of a spirit of penance to entertain such sentiments ; but it would have been difficult to find an asylum more solitary and more secluded from the intercourse of the world. The neighbourhood of Annecy was another motive, and the entreaties of his mother completed his determination.

He spent the first days after his arrival in receiving the visits and compliments of the clergy, the nobility, and of the different associations in his diocese, who came to congratulate him on his return, and on his elevation to the episcopal chair. As soon as he was disengaged from company, and left to enjoy solitude, he sent to Thonon to request the father Fourrier, a Jesuit, to have the goodness to repair to Sales, and to be his director during a retreat of twenty days, which he purposed to make in that retired place. It was under the direction of this pious and learned religious, that he drew up a plan of conduct, which he was determined to follow through life. A general confession of all his sins, meditation, silence, fast-

ing, the most austere practices of mortification were preparatory to the design which he had formed, seriously to promote the edification of his people by the regulation of his person and of his house. As it was by the constant and faithful observance of the rules, which he then laid down for his own conduct, that he attained that high degree of sanctity, which has rendered him an object of veneration to all the faithful, the reader will not be displeased with the detail, which is here given. We shall first begin by the exterior regulations respecting his person and house, and proceed in order to those, which regard the principles of an interior life.

* He made therefore an invariable regulation never to wear any silk in his dress, nor any attire too splendid and gaudy, such as camlet; but always use woollen, and in the same style of simplicity, as he observed before his elevation to the episcopacy; the magnificence of dress he by no means thought the distinguishing mark of a Bishop from an ordinary Priest. He resolved never to appear in the church, nor in public, without his rochet camail, the purple ornament worn by Bishops; and, as much as possible to

* Aug. of Sales. Book IV. Anon. Book I.

use them in his own house; this dress he considered as a perpetual admonition to attend to that decorum, modesty and reserve, which a Bishop should ever exhibit both in his own house, and in every other place. We may likewise here mention the strict injunction which he imposed on himself, never to speak to persons of the female sex without witnesses. His house was to be neat, but furnished in a style of simplicity, without paintings, or any pictures but of devotion, and even those were to be inconsiderable as to their number and value; he banished all magnificence of furniture, and with difficulty permitted, that two rooms should be ornamented with tapestry, one for strangers, and one to receive visits. He deprived himself of the use of a carriage, of a litter and even of a chair. His journies were always to be performed on foot, even in the visitation of his diocese, and in the worst of roads, unless very unseasonable weather should oblige him to use a horse.

He reduced his domestic attendants to two priests; one of whom was to be his almoner, and always to attend him, and the other to have the care of the temporal concerns, and to inspect the conduct of those in his service; he employed two valets, one for company, the other for himself; a single footman and two men servants in the

kitchen completed his household. They were forbidden to wear swords, or dress of any other colour than that of a dark brown; their conduct was to be orderly, modest and edifying; and they were frequently to approach to the sacraments. Every kind of game was prohibited in his household; and care was taken to give them such useful occupation, as allowed no time for dissipation. They were expressly enjoined to shew great deference and respect to the ecclesiastics, particularly to the priests; of this conduct he himself was to give the example. His house was always open; and strangers, who had no regular accommodation in town, were kindly enjoined to lodge no where but in the episcopal palace. It will be imagined that about a thousand crowns a year, which was the revenue of the Bishop of Geneva, did not enable him to support a larger establishment; but it must be remembered, that independently of the circumstance that Savoy is perhaps the cheapest country in the world, Francis was the eldest son of the illustrious house of Sales, and that as the Count his father, would never consent that he should relinquish his birth-right, he had ample means of living in a higher style of splendor, if his modesty and his love for the poor had not precluded such a plan.

As to his personal conveniences and the regulation of his table, he considered it a duty to prac-

tice with the utmost exactness, what the councils enjoin to Bishops, relative to temperance and frugality. Ordinary dishes only were to be provided, unless some person of distinction should be his guest; for in that case, he had made it a rule to avoid singularity. But then it was to be his practice, without any affectation, to confine himself to plain food, and he possessed a singular address in avoiding the use of any thing exquisite or delicate. Priests, as far as circumstances would permit, were to occupy the first places at his table. Some good book was to be read during half the time of the repast, the remaining part was allotted to innocent and useful conversation.

Finally, as he had learned from St. Paul, that he who does not know how to regulate his own house, will be much more incapable of governing the Church of God, he omitted no means of establishing that order in his household, that it might serve as a model to others. Thus having chosen his domestics with all possible care, he laboured to render their lives pious and exemplary. On that account, though by his plan a priest was appointed to inspect their conduct, he considered himself by no means exempt from a personal attention to their welfare. He lived with them as a father with his children; and he used to say that

it was not possible to shew them too much kindness; that there was an obligation of alleviating by gentle manners the pressure of their situation; and that if Providence had reversed their lot, they would have been our superiors, as we by the present order of things are raised above them. He knew however the art of confining this kindness within its just and natural limits. For if any one of his dependants did not conduct himself with that propriety, which a house so well regulated required, he was instantly reprimanded, and even dismissed, if the fault deserved that penalty. The same kindness he wished always to be shewn to those, who farmed the episcopal revenues, and to his debtors; he sometimes lost by this conduct, and his steward would venture to complain; but he replied, that a Bishop ought not to be rigorous in exacting his dues, and that nothing more became his character, than sometimes to surrender his rights.

Besides his private and secret charities, which must have been extensive, as he never on any occasion refused to give alms, he required that public charities should be bestowed at the gates of the episcopal palace; and that relief should be given to the hospital, to the Friar minors, to the Dominicans and to the Nuns of St. Clare. He

said on this occasion, that it is not lawful for a Bishop to conceal all his good works, particularly those of conscientious obligation, such as works of charity; as it is one of the highest of his duties to give good example to his people. From the same motive of edification, he made it a constant rule, to assist on all feasts of devotion at the churches, in which they were celebrated; and he was there seen to attend at the office and sermon. It was his favourite maxim, that when the service of God and of our neighbour is concerned, a Bishop ought always to appear at the head of his people. But his leading regulation was, never to depend on any one for the care of the poor and the sick, but to visit them himself, and to provide in person for their wants and their comforts; this duty he afterwards discharged with such punctuality, as excited astonishment, how with so little a revenue, he could meet such extensive demands. It is true that in an hour of need he would mortgage even his chapel. But whatever may be said, his example shews, that when a man is determined to withdraw from luxury whatever it demands beyond necessities, the calls of charity may easily be answered.

Finally he made a firm resolution never to enter on any legal proceedings; and rather to suffer

wrong, than to have recourse to law for redress. He said on that subject, that St. Paul forbade Christians to apply to courts of judicature; that much more was the prohibition extended to Bishops; that one of the leading qualities which St. Paul requires of them is, that they should not be litigious; and he added, what is universally known to have been one of his maxims, that in a hundred weight of law, there never was an ounce of charity. Francis having made these regulations for the exterior government, and the external duties of the Bishop, adopted the following plan as the rule of an interior life.

He was to rise every day at four in the morning, to make an hour's meditation, to recite the morning office, to say prayers to his household, and read the holy scriptures till seven; he then studied till nine, when he quitted his studies to say mass; and every day he made it a rule to celebrate the Divine mysteries. After mass he employed the remaining part of the morning in the affairs of his diocese till dinner. After dinner he allotted an hour to conversation, and then resumed the business of his diocese till the evening; when there was no business to engage his attention, he devoted the time to study and to prayer. After supper some book of devotion was read for an hour;

and this lecture furnished the subject of the meditation for the ensuing day. The prayers to the household were then said, when, after all had retired, he said matins for the following day. This was the order of the day, which he framed for himself.

Besides the fasts, commanded by the Church, he made a rule of fasting every Friday and Saturday, and on the eves of the festivals of the Blessed Virgin. On solemn festivals, he assisted at the whole office of the cathedral with his household. On Sundays and common festivals, he contented himself with attending at the high mass and vespers. Every year he made a retreat of ten days. To this exercise he devoted the time of Shrovetide, in order, as he said, to prepare himself to spend lent in proper dispositions, and in some manner to atone for the disorders, which were committed in that time of riot and intemperance.

As he was strongly persuaded of that truth taught by the council of Trent, that preaching is the principal duty of Bishops; that for their example, Christ their great model had said, that he had to announce the gospel, because he was sent for that end; and that St. Paul had added, that Christ had sent him not to baptise, but to preach;

he made it an invariable rule to preach to his people, as often as possible. The catechism and the instruction of the poor he never considered as beneath his dignity; and it will appear, that he often performed that duty in public, and more frequently in his Episcopal palace. Residence, a matter of such consequence and so little practised in his time, appeared to him too necessary, and too much recommended to Bishops by the councils to admit of a dispensation; he purposed therefore never to leave his diocese without an evident necessity, or without very powerful reasons, always connected with the utility of the Church and of his neighbour.

It does not appear by these regulations, drawn up for his own conduct, that he imposed on himself any extraordinary austerities or rigours of penance. But it may be observed, that an exact and uniform life, always engaged in duty, and always intent on God and the concerns of the faithful, cannot be considered but as a life of great mortification. Besides it is known, that he wore a hair shirt, and took the discipline; but he did it in a very secret manner, as he was naturally averse to ostentation, and as his station did not demand those exterior rigours, which certainly do not constitute the merit of a Bishop. To

consider things in a proper light, sanctity does not consist in performing extraordinary mortifications, but in doing, each one in his situation, what God requires. There is something great in dying for God; but it is perhaps not less difficult, nor less great to know how to live for Him.

Francis having drawn up this plan of conduct, by the advice of his director, followed it afterwards with the utmost exactness; far from diminishing any of the observances, he even added much, which he had not at first undertaken; and it is to this fidelity in all his duties, that we are to ascribe those bright examples of virtue and sanctity, which will appear in the following part of this history.

However as the day of his consecration was approaching, he began to feel in a more lively manner, that great apprehension and alarm which he had before experienced, on seeing himself at the point of being elevated to that rank which he was now about to assume. It appeared to him, that he had not made sufficient resistance, and that he had yielded with too much facility. The more he examined the qualities, which are necessary to form the character of a holy Bishop, the more he felt his deficiency; and as his humility shewed him

only his defects, he considered himself as a pilot, who was going to embark on a boisterous sea, full of rocks, without knowledge, without experience, without mast, without sails, without rudder, totally destitute of those helps, which were to preserve him from shipwreck. This interior trouble proceeded so far, that he opened his mind on the subject to the Father Fourrier, who was his director in his retreat. But this learned religious, who knew the violence, which he had offered to himself to consent to his elevation, who saw in him such evident marks of a Divine vocation, and who daily admired that pure virtue, of which he alone was not aware, raised his courage, and with much difficulty restored the calm of his soul. Thus Francis invigorated by the advice of him, whom he considered as the interpreter of the will of God, who called him to the episcopal station, thought only of drawing down the plenitude of that spirit, which forms the true character of a Bishop. He redoubled his fasts, his austerities and his prayers; in those exercises he passed days and nights; or if he ceased to speak to God in prayer, it was only to listen to Him speaking to man in the holy scriptures.

Nothing could draw him from his retreat, but the arrival of Vespasian Gribaldo, Archbishop of Vienne, and Metropolitan of Geneva, accompa-

nied by the Bishops of Damascus and St. Pol-trois Chateaux, whom he had invited to perform the ceremony of his consecration. He went himself to receive them. But it appeared on this occasion, that whatever deference he had for his director, he was not entirely recovered from those holy fears, with which God had filled him on viewing the episcopal station. For the Archbishop having told him, that he came with extraordinary joy to consecrate him, as he was persuaded, that he should give a holy prelate to the Church, Francis replied, that he had too good an opinion of him; that if he knew him, as well as he knew himself, his joy would be changed into grief; that if God had heard his desires and his prayers, he would have spared him the trouble, which he had taken; and that he conjured him to join his prayers with his own, to obtain of God, that his consecration might not be the effect of his secret judgments, which sometimes punish hidden faults, by engagements full of dangers, and above our strength. After this conversation, which shewed the true feelings of his heart, he begged the Archbishop and Bishops to permit him to continue his retreat, and returned to his solitude.

END OF THE FOURTH BOOK AND FIRST VOL.

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